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the Perfectionist's Guide to Fantastic Video

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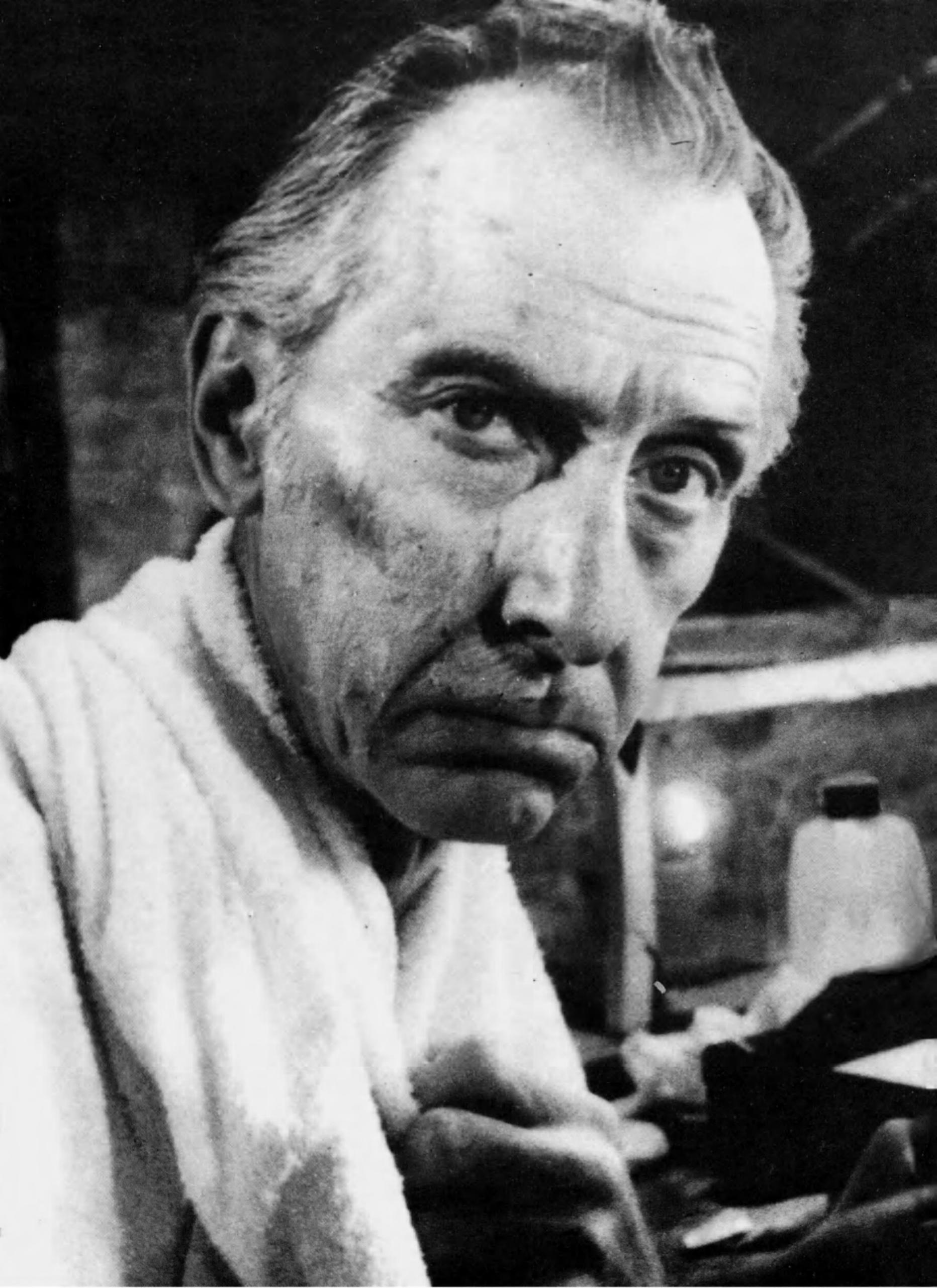


TERROR AT THE OPEA Dario Argento's Aria of Violence

THE RUSSIAN FAIRYTALES OF ** ALEKSANDR PTUSHKO ** FREDDIE FRANCIS

* JOHN CARPENTER

RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS



Video the Perfectionist's Guide to Fantastic Video Watchdoff No. 8 Nov / Dec 199

"There are some things Man was not meant to splice!"

—Dr. Catheter, GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH (1990)

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a striking publicity pose for Orion Home Video's

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991).

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Cover:	Cristina Marsillach is the starer of TERROR AT THE DPERA (1987), finally available in the US—from Dixon's THE FILMS OF FREDI		
Inside:	No, it's not Peter Cushing! It's Vincent Price as Peter Cushing—makeup by George Blackler—in the shocking finale of HBO Video's MADHOUSE (1974)!	and Robert C. Cumbow's ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE: THE FILMS OF JOHN CARPENTER.	
Back:	Jody Foster, Anthony Hopkins, and Scott Glenn in		

Kennel

- LUCAS BALBO's Nostalgia Archive (78 Rue de la Folie-Régnault, 75011 Paris, France) supplied rare stills to Horror Pictures' BARBARA STEELE photo-booklet. His Interview with Joseph Green appears in SHOCK XPRESS—THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO EXPLOITATION CINEMA
- JASON GRAY & DENNIS CAPICIK are the publishers of SUBTERRANEA (\$3.50 per issue/47 Thorncliffe Park Drive #609, Toronto, Ontario M4H 1J5, Canada). The 7th issue includes an interview with Nick Zedd, an Al Cliver filmography, and a report on the Montreal video scene.
- GRAF HAUFEN is the Co-Publisher/Editor of SPLATTING IMAGE, Germany's outstanding horror film magazine; the 7th issue boasts a Joe D'Amato interview. Write to Graf at Videodrom (Zossener Str. 20, 1000 Berlin 61, Germany) for ordering information.
- CRAIG LEDBETTER is currently preparing the fourth issue of ETC: EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA (\$10 for 4 issues/PO Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325), which features a Steve Bissette cover and interviews with Sergio Martino and Lamberto Bava.

- SPROCKETS last August. His essay "The Black Stare of Soledad Miranda"—a tribute to the Portuguese actress on the 20th Anniversary of her untimely death—will be featured in EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA #4.
- MAITLAND McDONAGH is the author of BROKEN MIRRORS/BROKEN MINDS: THE DARK DREAMS OF DARIO ARGENTO, published in the UK by Sun Tavern Fields. She wrote the survey "Horror in the '70s" for FANGORIA #100, and has also written for FILM COMMENT, GOREZONE and PREMIERE.
- SIMONE ROMANO is a freelance writer living in Pordenone, Italy. In addition to VW, he contributes regularly to EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA and BOOK OF THE DEAD.
- ALAN UPCHURCH translated the screenplay of Eisenstein's lost film Bezhin Meadow (1935-7) for a book-length study/reconstruction, now available from Princeton University Press. More recently, he contributed rare stills and an Introduction to Horror Pictures' BARBARA STEELE photo-booklet.

VW THANKS

Natalie Anderson (LIVE Entertainment), Sharon Aretsky (MGM/UA-Bender Goldman & Helper), Gloria Berg (Orion Home Video), Aya Betensky (Scarecrow Press), Steve Bissette, Ronald V. Borst (Hollywood Movie Posters), Tony Bridges, Eric Caidin (Hollywood Book and Poster), Lorenzo Codelli, Catherine Cox (Connoisseur Video), Rachel Cruz (Showtime), David Del Valle (in Big Neon Letters), Chris Dietrich, Andi Elliott (Southgate Video), Fanex 5 (for the memories), Fritz Friedman and Marilu Eagles (RCA/Columbia Home Video), Richard Gordon, the fabulous Alan Jones, Bill Kelley, Charles Kilgore, Michael Lennick, Greg Luce (Sinister Cinema), Dave Marshall (Marshall Discount Video), Don May (Laser's Edge), Jim & Jane McCabe (Video Vault), Radomir Perica, George Port (Video Treasures), Jim Schoene, Nina Shaka (Fox Lorber Associates Inc.), George Stover (Cinemacabre Video), Erik Sulev, Gary & Susan Svehla, Lisa Taback (Rhino Video), Douglas Winter, Bret Wood (Kino International), our contributors, subscribers, and our oh-so-patient correspondents!

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THE WATCHDOG BARKS



S A YOUNG BOY at the movies, I often hid my eyes as the latest rubber-faced monstrosity loomed into view. I

was also uncommonly susceptible to color and can remember shielding my eyes just as often from images of intense beauty, fearful that their vivid, incandescent quality might blind me. The first time I remember having this feeling was during Sinbad's netting of the gold-finned fish in AIP's THE MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD (1961).

I was too young at the time to read screen credits but, even if I had, AIP's pseudonymous roster would have been worse than uninformative. Today, I know this film to be the work of an extraordinary Soviet filmmaker named Aleksandr Ptushko. THE MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD, AIP's truncated version of the esteemed Soviet classic **Sadko** (1952) was the only Ptushko film I ever saw on a large screen. I'm confident, though, that some of the gigantic, literally overwhelming images from his other films would have dazzled me just as much—like the impossibly crowded battlefield in THE SWORD AND THE DRAGON (1956) or the iridescent aura radiating from the Sampo in THE DAY THE EARTH FROZE (1959).

Like his contemporaries William Cameron Menzies, George Pal, and Mario Bava, Alexander Ptushko provided his own special effects; he was a complete filmmaker in the truest sense, one of the great geniuses of the fantasy film—yet, in America, he remains utterly unknown, even among the *cognoscenti* of the fantastic. Imported at the height of US/Soviet antipathy, the American versions of Ptushko's films were credited to such imaginary *auteurs* as "Alfred Posco," "Julian Strandberg," and "David Stolar." Consequently, Ptushko's

achievement has not only gone unrecognized but his *oeuvre* has been utterly misrepresented as the works of several different men!

Till now.

In this issue, Soviet film scholar and translator Alan Upchurch brings his talents to bear in Part One of the first full-length study of Ptushko's career ever to appear—in English, French, or (believe it or not) Russian! Alan's article is much more than a tribute to a film pioneer; as the first piece written in English about the Russian fantastika, it presents an entire working vocabulary for future scholars approaching this field. This magazine is routinely mailed to video companies and we openly urge Kino on Video, Connoisseur Video, or any other label with an interest in classic international cinema to make more of Ptushko's ingenious films available in the US. The time has come for a Ptushko renaissance!

VW #8 also honors the US video debut long overdue—of Dario Argento's TERROR AT THE OPERA (1987) with an excerpt from Maitland McDonagh's excellent new book BROKEN MIRRORS/BROKEN MINDS: THE DARK DREAMS OF DARIO ARGENTO. As a British publication, we felt the book might escape the notice of some interested readers, so we're giving you a chance to sample it and the information necessary to acquire your own copy. We're also reintroducing our muchmissed "Cutting Room Floor" department with an article detailing how well the US versions of TERROR AT THE OPERA and the Argento-produced **DEMONS** compare with their Japanese laserdisc counterparts.

Thanks to everyone who visited Donna and me at our booth at Fanex 5, and grateful thanks to all involved for awarding our first year of publication.

• • • • • Tim Lucas

Watchdog News



One of the classic scenes you won't find on UAV's SANTA CLAUS-THE MOTION PICTURE.

Mommy, Is There Really a Satan?

If you're planning to buy copies of Rene Cardona's SANTA CLAUS (1959) to use as stocking-stuffers this holiday season, be aware that the best-looking version currently available comes from United American Video. You should also know that UAV is selling an alternative version, as well.

UAV's SANTA CLAUS_THE MOTION PICTURE (not to be confused with Jeannot Szwarc's SANTA CLAUS_THE MOVIE, 1985) is also an attractive transfer

of the Cardona kiddie classic, but it is more than a mere retitling. The EP-recorded feature (priced at \$9.95) is preceded by a strange announcement:

"The following motion picture represents a substantial abridgement, condensation, and reedited version of the original 1960's classic SANTA CLAUS. The producers have preserved the integrity of the original film while attempting to remove all seemingly objectionable material."

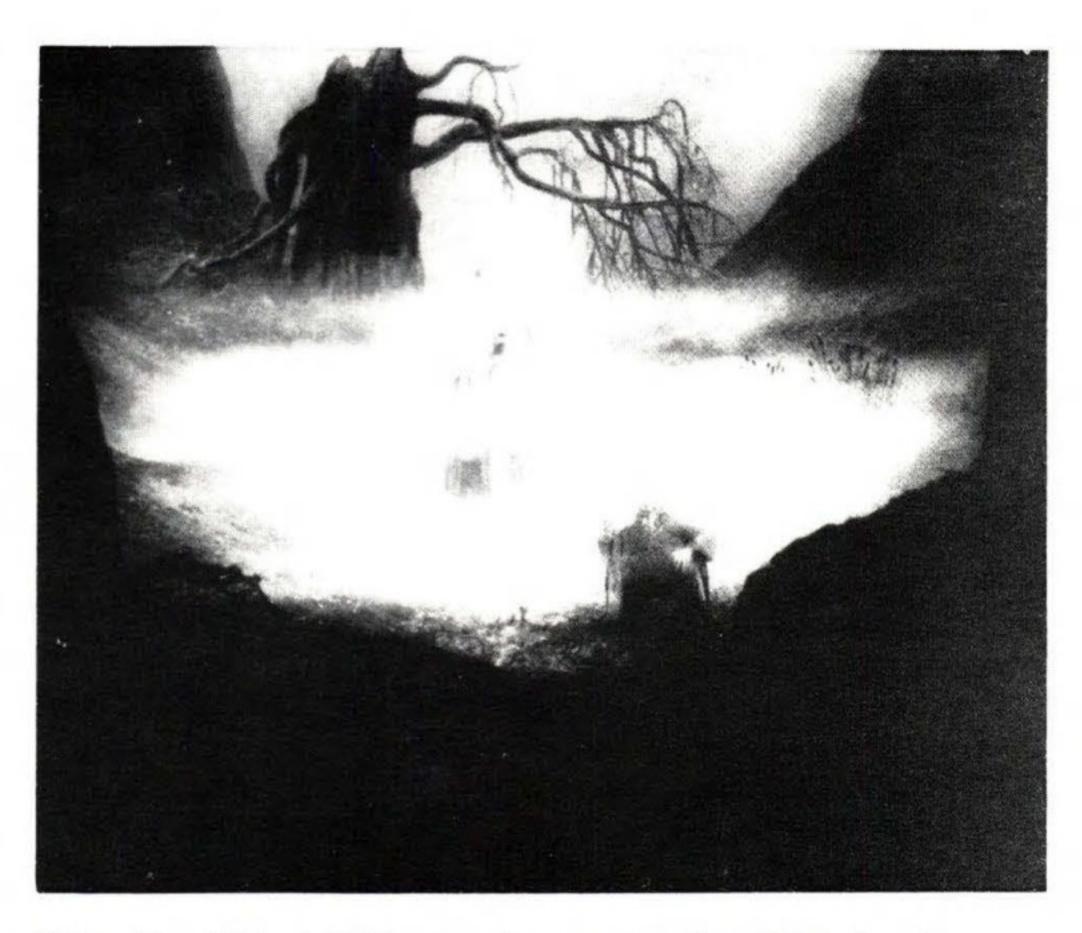
This shortened edition—whose abridgement is credited to David Millar—runs only 63m, as opposed to the original 94m length! What's missing? All of the scenes featuring the Devil! According to Jeffrey C. Hogue, the film's presenter, "When we originally released the film on UAV a few years back, we received several letters from concerned mothers, complaining about those scenes. I think the footage we took out added-up to maybe 7-8m."

Cardona's moral fable pits Santa Claus, as a figure of good influence, against the evil influences of a flaming red, Spockeared, Méliès-styled Satan (whose name jumbles the spelling of Santa's own), whom Santa soundly defeats by the film's conclusion. In SANTA CLAUS, Satan first appears to tempt the child Lupita to steal a doll her poor mother can't afford, a temptation she finally denies. In SC—TMP, no Devil appears and, though tempted by unseen forces, Lupita puts the doll back before leaving the marketplace. In both versions, the scene is followed by Santa's omniscient comment, "All my friends can ignore the Devil!"

Oddly enough, the abridged SC_TMP leaves intact other material which could be interpreted as equally objectionable. For example, there is Santa's heavily pharmaceutical tote bag, which not only dispenses "sleeping powder" (to drug children trying to catch a glimpse of him), but also "the powder that makes you dream while you're awake," distilled from the same white flower that grants Santa invisibility. When Santa loses this flower and regains his visibility, he is chased up a tree by a dog, hears sirens, and experiences other paranoid delusions!

In an earlier scene, one of Santa's helpers asks him what kinds of things are eaten by the people of Earth. "Almost anything," replies the jolly old elf, "even smoke and alcohol!" Indeed, Santa later combines the two vices by serving two smoking yellow "cocktails of remembrance" to an adult couple, arousing in them such intense feelings of love and ecstacy that they literally flee from a nightclub to embrace their long-neglected son.

To be fair, there was a more practical agenda involved in abbreviating the picture. As Hogue explained to us, **SANTA CLAUS** is now a public domain title, and he prides himself on owning three 35mm prints which he believes to be the best-looking in existence.



Before Republic's definitive transfer, most copies of Fritz Lang's SIEGFRIED (1922) looked impossibly foggy.

His unique abridgement of the picture has entitled him to place **SC—TMP** under renewed copyright in his own name. (The UAV tape concludes with a 1989 copyright notice assigned to American Entertainment Ltd., Inc.)

Despite the absence of an entire character and nearly 30m of footage, Hogue's **SC**—**TMP** still manages to function as a merry entertainment. Perhaps the most generous remark one could make is that, without prior knowledge of the Satan subplot, the neatly-excised footage would scarcely be missed at all.

Curiously, this shortened version contains footage (e.g., the opening shot of Santa's asteroid castle) not included in the film's earlier release by the now-defunct Canadian label Interglobal Video, as well as vastly superior color and print quality. But the definitive version of **SANTA CLAUS** remains the complete print (Satan, asteroid castle, and all), which is *also* issued by (JAV... under its original, two-word title.

Shhh! The Silent Film Wars

You may have noticed, in recent months, that several video companies are dusting-off silent classics for release in new, socalled "definitive" versions. The reason behind all the hubbub is that video companies can "own" public domain material by copyrighting a unique presentation of said material, a comparatively recent legal epiphany which has lead video majors to invade the onceexclusive province of their low-rent mail order compatriots. By adding such distinctive signature effects as color tints, original intertitles, and re-recorded stereo soundtracks to silent eyesores—a kind of "video fingerprinting"—any company in possession of passable-looking prints may claim for its own the earliest crowning achievements of world cinema.

Video Images/Video Yesteryear, one of the oldest distributors



Lon Chaney offers Mary Philbin a chance to win her freedom in THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925).

of silent films on video, anticipated this trend with their "AccuSpeed" releases. A trademarked gimmick which supposedly reproduces the original speed of silent film action, "AccuSpeed" essentially projects silent footage at roughly 18 f.p.s. [frames per second]—much slower than many silent films actually require. As a result, some Video Images titles—Alfred Hitchcock's THE LODGER (1926) is a prime example—are so dragged-out as to be unwatchable, and the process also makes dirt and scratches on prints doubly evident. As if to antagonize bootleggers, Video Images also interrupts its features with an unexpected and downright irritating Intermission card, asking the viewer to "Please wait while we change reels." Several Video Images releases are available, cheaper but fuzzier, from secondhand corporations like Foothills Video—which replace their original, copyrighted Rosa Rios organ scores with anonymous classical muzak. But VI's visual fingerprinting is always a dead giveaway of their true source.

Perhaps the most prominent of the recent silent repackagings is Republic Home Video's release of such classics as John Stuart Robertson's DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1920, with John Barrymore) and F.W. Murnau's NOSFERATU (1922), attractively packaged and affordably priced at

\$19.95. Though splendid-looking, these titles suffer from a presentation that is quite the opposite of "AccuSpeed." Most, if not all, of Republic's silents have been transferred to tape at 24 f.p.s., which helps them to fit onto inexpensive T-60 cassettes but is, again, not the speed at which these films were meant to be seen. Despite the ersatz time-compression of their releases, Republic has released the definitive versions of the Fritz Lang diptych SIEG-FRIED/KREIMHELD'S REVENGE (1922; respectively 110m and 95m, available together as DIE NIEBELUNGEN on a two-disc package on Image Entertainment laserdisc), as well as the most complete available version of the Rudolph Valentino classic **BLOOD** AND SAND (also '22).

Because silent films are nowadays more often discussed than seen, and almost never seen under ideal conditions, it has been all too easy for incomplete prints in passable shape to be embraced by consumers as the genuine article. A good case in point is the recent Lumivision laserdisc of Rupert Julian's THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925, \$49.95), which was touted as definitive only weeks before Image Entertainment issued the far more complete, cleaner-looking Kino International edition on disc at a lesser price (\$39.95)—a two-disc set including the original 1925 film and its 1929 alternate version!

On October 21, the silent film specialists Kino on Video will hold the competition in check with five newly remastered classics in their "Visions of Horror" series: NOSFERATU, SPIES, DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, Carl Dreyer's VAMPYR, and Stuart Paton's 1916 version of 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. Of the five titles, only 20,000

LEAGUES is completely new to home video, but the other four promise to be equally unique. All are priced at \$29.95.

Kino's NOSFERATU is newly restored and color-tinted. remastered from a 35mm negative. It includes recently discovered scenes not in previous releases and intertitles newly translated from Murnau's original German script. Kino's print runs 84m—24m longer than the recent Republic Home Video issue—but the true difference in running times is indeterminable, their different projection speeds. While Republic's NOSFERATU projected at 24 f.p.s., Kino's follows the film's original projection plan of 20 f.p.s. This, in turn, is brisker than the lethargic transfer offered by Video Images, which runs 100m 23s (minus introductory and end titles). With its projection speed properly adjusted, Video Images' NOSFERATU may have a slight edge on Kino's version but, as it is, the Kino version promises a more vivid and authentic delivery.

Kino's tape releases of SPIES and DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE are being preceded by their laserdisc releases from Image Entertainment, priced respectively at \$49.95 and \$39.95. SPIES is the complete 88m export version of the film; Fritz Lang also prepared Splone, a 120m version for Germany, which remains unavailable. Video Images' "AccuSpeed" SPIES runs 117m; without its speed adjusted, this choppy version comes up quite a bit shorter than Kino's 88m transfer. Kino's DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1920), at 96m, is 21m longer than the 24 f.p.s. version from Republic and is already available on Image laserdisc. The tape, like the disc version, includes the supplementary bonus of the complete 1911 one-reeler starring James Cruze, as well as the transformation sequence from the Sheldon Lewis version, also filmed in 1920. The Image disc extends its supplement (in CAV) to include the complete original shooting script.

The availability of a definitive VAMPYR is particularly good news, since the best available version is in German and subtitled in Danish with inadequate English intertitles. (Also, being Danish, the end title card reads SLUT!). VAMPYR is also scheduled for Image laserdisc release.

20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA is one of the few surviving Universal silents, most of which-including most of Tod Browning's early achievements were voluntarily destroyed by the studio. Despite the film's description as a 12-reeler in THE AFI CATALOGUE 1911-20, Kino believes their 10 reel version to be complete. It includes the film's rarest footage, the giant squid battle, reportedly a last-minute acquisition that nearly missed being included in their final assembly. The film, considered to be the first great special effects showcase of the American cinema, runs 105m at its suggested projection speed of 20 f.p.s. 20,000 LEAGUES was one of several Universal titles recently requested for preservation by Martin Scorsese and Francis Coppola's The Film Foundation, an organization dedicated to the protection of America's motion picture heritage.

These new titles join Kino's earlier "Visions of Horror" releases, including the definitive versions of METROPOLIS (90m), THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (52m), THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (100m), THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (79m), and AELITA, QUEEN OF MARS (133m).

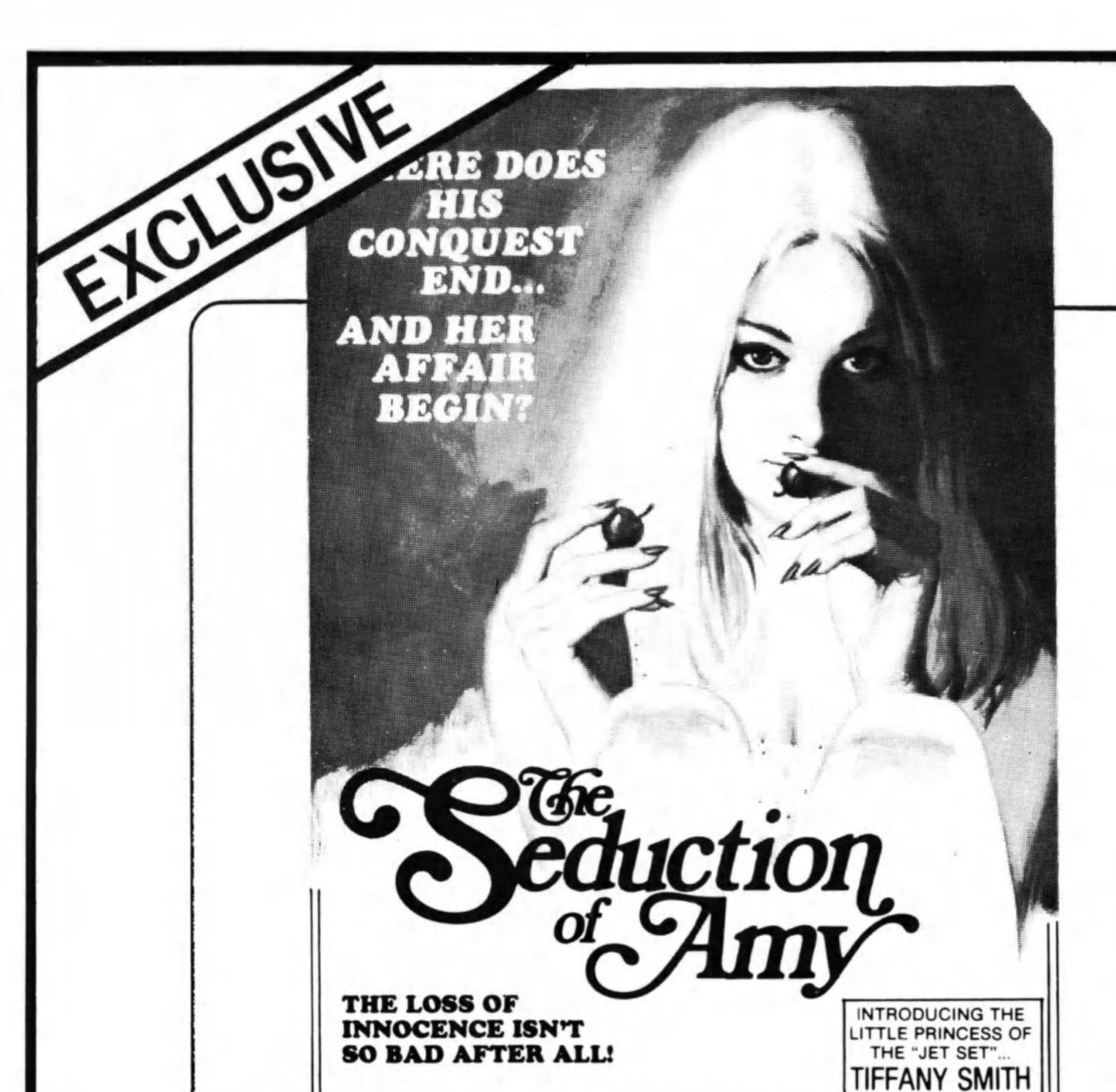
Retitlings

THE COMING OF ALIENS (label unknown) is Mario Gariazzo/
"Roy Garrett"'s softcore SFfrolic VERY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH KIND
[Incontri molto ravvicinati
di un certo tipo, 1979]. This
letterboxed transfer is apparently bootlegged from the film's legitimate British video release, and appears to be complete.

DEATH'S ECSTACY (label unknown) is an English-dubbed version of Walerian Borowczyk's starkly erotic THE BEAST [La Bête, 1975). The print runs 93m, and is missing 4m of explicit horse breeding footage and even more explicit footage of Beauty (Sirpa Lane) having very liquid intercourse with The Beast. No complete version of the film exists in English. Like THE COMING OF ALIENS, this appears to be a letterboxed bootleg of a legitimate UK source.

America) is EMANUELLE, QUEEN OF SADOS [Secrets Erotiques d'Emanuelle, "Emanuelle's Erotic Secrets," 1976], directed by Ilias Milonakos under the supervision of Joe D'Arnato. VidAmerica's unrated cassette is stronger than the version shown on US cable outlets.

is Radley Metzger's THE LICK-ERISH QUARTET (1970), with Silvana Venturelli and Frank Wolff. This intelligent, aggressively arty film was one of the



-SYNOPSIS-

Set in the beautifully lush forests of Florida "The Seduction of Amy" utilizes the only European Chateau in the United States. This enormous castle and it's surronding grounds are the setting for one of the most incredible motion pictures of our time. Amy, a lovely child of 17, is slowly and methodically seduced into a love ritual so bizarre, so excitingly erotic it will have audiences talking about Amy for years to come.

Amy meets Gideon, the master of the chateau, who utilizes every nook and crany of the castle for non-stop orgies. Here you will meet some very strange ladies and gentelman. Included in this array of deviates are the Krelmn Twins, sisters who do everything together to anyone and everyone. Poor little Amy has never seen or even dreamed of what she sees but is unable to escape the power of Gideon. A man so posessed with possessing that Amy is no match for his evil mind. As is Gideon's design, Amy finally gives in and the seduction is complete, culminating in a love scene filmed on the deserted beaches of Key West. A scene so breath taking it alone took 3 weeks to film.

"The Seduction of Amy" is the kind of adult entertainment your audiences have begged for again and again. The people are beautiful, the scenery startling and the story is brilliantly portrayed. It's a film that will fill your theatre. That's a promise from Amy.

RUNNING TIME: 74 MINUTES:

last in Metzger's long string of popular Eurosex co-productions, including CARMEN BABY, THÉRESE AND ISABELLE (on Monterey Home Video), and CAMILLE 2000. Surely this must be one of the highest-profile retitlings so far!

ICON (American Video) is Giorgio Ferroni's beautiful and spinetingling MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN [Il mulino della donne di pietra, 1960], previously available in an overdark 16mm transfer from Paragon Video. This version is taken from a different print than Paragon's but remains in rough shape; it's missing the original opening credits sequence. The trailer for MILL included on Sinister Cinema's CLASSIC HORROR TRAIL-ERS VOLUME 12 offers a breathtaking glimpse of what this film should look like.

Screenings) is Max Pecas' I AM FRIGID... WHY?, an intense psychological sex film originally released here by Radley Metzger's Audubon Films in 1973. Starring Sandra Jullien, it's the flip-side to her previous Pecas film, Je Suis une nymphomane (1970; VW 6:7), telling the tale of a young woman whose sex and fantasy life is traumatized by incestuous rape.

THE LOVES OF A WALL STREET WOMAN (Private Screenings, on Cinemax) is Joe D'Amato's HIGH FINANCE WOMAN (1990), starring Tara Buckman and Richard Brown.

Wonderful World of Video's synopsis for THE SEDUCTION OF AMY—Jean Rollin's Phantasmes Pornographiques (1975)—set bold new standards for hyperbolic hooey.



W

E'VE RECEIVED SOME letters over the last few months citing difficulties in ordering Video Treasures' MEMPHIS BELLE

(\$9.95; VW 2:6-7), which includes Chuck Jones' rare animated political short **HELL-BENT FOR ELECTION**. According to Video Treasures' George Port, **MEMPHIS BELLE** is still available, albeit from VT's subsidiary label Burbank Video; it has a suggested retail price of \$9.98. Interested Jonesians can purchase the tape by writing directly to Burbank Video, 2001 Glenn Parkway, Batavia OH, 45103. Tell them you read it here.

D'Amato has a terrific cameo, as a sentimental husband whose memories of courting his own lumpen wife reblossom when he overhears Brown shout "You're nothing but a whore!" at Buckman in a restaurant. Though filmed entirely in the United States, Wall Street itself is shown only briefly. No video release has been announced.

THE OBJECT OF DESIRE (Private Screenings, Pay-Per-View) is Joe D'Amato's BLUE ANGEL CAFE (1990), also starring Tara Buckman and Richard Brown. This blasé potboiler features Brown as a Dan Quayle-like politician whose affair with a cabaret singer ruins his marriage and career. Like LOVES OF A WALL STREET WOMAN, the scenario builds to one of those "You're nothing but a whore!" confrontations, this time with D'Amato nowhere in sight. Ms. Buckman's nightclub act is a hoot; it consists of only one boring "I'm-Down-And-Out-But-I'm-Fightin'-Back" number-delivered à la Minnelli in Dietrich duds—yet it captures NYC newspaper headlines! (They should have read "AC-TRESS MURDERS SONG.") No video release yet.

THE SEDUCTION OF AMY (Wonderful World of Video) is Jean Rollin's Phantasmes Pornographiques ("Pornographic Phantoms"), a 1975 hardcore fantasy which was released in Great Britain in softer, condensed (49m!) form as ONCE UPON A VIRGIN. Essentially 90m of mysterious couples screwing in the crypts of a poorly-lit château, this is at once bad filmmaking and quintessential Rollin. The credits are such a complete fabrication, they deserve to be quoted: The film is copyrighted 1977 by Art Mart and Tam Productions... "Introducing in her film debut TIF-FANY SMITH as Amy" (actually Mylène d'Antes)... Continuity by Jill St. John (!)... Written, Produced, and Directed by Dale J. Martin. Rollin's twin fetish actresses, Catherine and Pony Castel, are credited as "Michelle and Rochelle Krelmn." The credits further alledge that "Amy's Theme" was recorded for Night Records by Christi Colum—which may be actually true. Out of print, but may be found in more venerable adult video

[Thanks to Craig Ledbetter, Tim Murphy, and Sam Stetson.]

stores.





Video Around the World

USA

Silence's
Lecter
Some
Science
Lectures

BELL SCIENCE

1956-62, Rhino Video HF, \$19.95 each

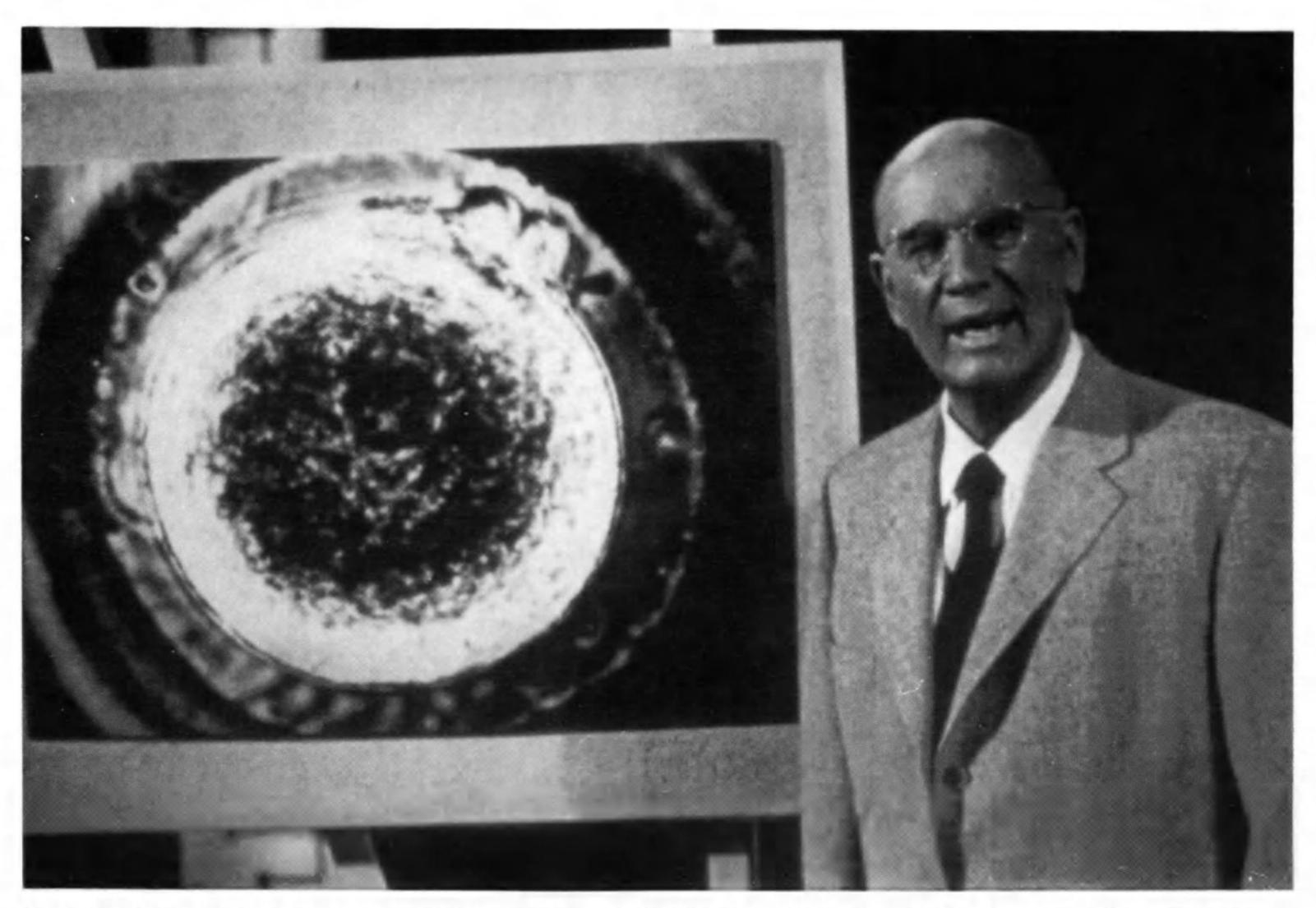
In the late '50s and early '60s, while Forrest J. Ackerman was popularizing science fiction, Dr. Frank C. Baxter was busy popularizing science. In addition to "introducing" Universal's THE MOLE PEOPLE (1956), Dr. Baxter appeared as "Dr. Research" in this series of highly imaginative and informative science specials, produced by Bell Telephone under the respective supervision of Frank Capra and Jack M. Warner. These Technicolor specials were aired on television, but achieved their greatest usefulness in the classroom, where they continue to be shown today. Many of you may remember these films as I do, seeing them in science class, or in elementary school auditoriums on days when rain brought recess indoors. The avuncular Baxter (who died in 1982) won a Peabody Award for his contribution to this

series, and occupies a special place in every imagination he helped to stimulate during the period of his celebrity.

Frank Capra's OUR MR. SUN (1955, aired '56), the first of the series, established the program's essential format: Dr. Research and his excitable sidekick, The Fiction Writer (Eddie Albert), are preparing tonight's program about the sun. (This ingenious format allows the program being rehearsed to become the program itself, illustrating without saying so the exhilaration of scientific discovery.) While the scientist presents the "real lowdown," the writer

KEY		
cc	Closed Captioned	
D	Digital	
DS	Digital Stereo	
HF	Hi-Fi	
LB	Letterboxed	
NSR	No Suggested Retail	
S	Stereo	
SS-S	Surround Sound Stereo	

Lucas Balbo (France), Dennis Capicik & Jason Gray (Canada), Graf Haufen (Germany), Craig Ledbetter (Venezuela), Simone Romano (Italy) and The Video Watchdog



Dr. Frank C. Baxter tells you what this is, among other things, in Rhino's wonderful BELL SCIENCE series.

unveils his creative contribution— The Magic Screen, which presents Shamus Culhane cartoons of Old Father Time (voiced by Lionel Barrymore) and the Sun itself (Marvin Miller, the voice of Robby the Robot), subsequently using animation to present factual demonstrations, graphs and statistics in an entertaining, easily grasped fashion. The moral tone of the times is evident from the show's determination to relate all things scientific to the mysterious beneficence of a Christian God—though we are told that millions are starying, the fact of our presence on the only planet with perfect conditions for life proves that "Someone must love [us] very much." Of all the BELL SCIENCE tapes, OUR MR. SUN is in the least good shape; while the Technicolor is warm and the print remarkably unsplicy, the resolution is a bit fuzzy.

In Capra's THE STRANGE CASE OF THE COSMIC RAYS (1957), Richard Carlson replaces Eddie Albert as The Fiction Writer. As a frequent star of 50's Science Fiction movies like IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE and RID-ERS TO THE STARS, Carlson was an inspired substitute. In fact, Albert (with his dyed hair and vocal mannerisms) almost seems to be impersonating Carlson, rather than vice versa; their readings of the character are virtually identical. With his bombastic exclamations ("This really knocked the science dicks for a loop!"), Carlson is the perfect compliment to the professorial Baxter. Here, they use the Magic Screen to disrupt Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe (with raven) and Fyodor "Dosty" Dostoevsky—in the form of Bill and Cora Baird's Marionettes—as they cast their ballots for the Edgar Award given annually to the Year's Best Mystery. The story of how science detected and identified these earth-bombarding particles is presented as a great detective story, with the discovery of nuclear energy as its climax. UPA-animated electrons, protons, and neutrons ("Three energy-packed babies!," enthuses Carlson) appear in bankrobber garb, the ultra-violet ray is depicted as a cartoon Mae West tucking electrons into her cleavage, and distinguished Nobel Prize-winners are cast in stock footage as the greatest sleuths of the age. It's sheer delight and, apart from a couple of splices in the 16mm source print, the quality is very good.

Perhaps the most famous of the BELL SCIENCE titles is **HEMO THE MAGNIFICENT** (1958), a study of blood and the circulatory



Dr. Baxter and friend encounter the Jabberwock in THE ALPHABET CONSPIRACY (1959).

system, excerpts from which appeared in the science class scene of Joe Dante's GREMLINS (1984). This segment was notorious at my school for its unapologetic footage of open-heart surgery and cardiac massage, and its "gross" descriptions of how long it would take a human heart to pump an Olympic-sized pool full of blood. Hemo the Magnificent is the Culhane-animated embodiment of blood's nobility and heroismthe blood of ancestors, blood spilled in battle, etc.-who appears on The Magic Screen with a number of friendly forest animals, annoyed at the audacity of scientists who would reduce his mysteries to data. ("Now just a goshdarn minute, you... you... Hemo hot-stuff!" Carlson reprimands.) Hemo and his friends—a bird, a squirrel, a deer, and a tortoiseallow for the demonstration of

variable heartbeats, and are recognizably voiced (without screen credit) by Marvin Miller, Mel Blanc, and June Foray (as the deer, not the squirrel!). HEMO THE MAGNIFICENT marked Richard Carlson's last appearance in the series, and it was also Frank Capra's scientific swan song, as he moved on to direct his penultimate feature, A HOLE IN THE HEAD (1959).

THE GATEWAYS TO THE MIND (1958, subtitled THE STORY OF THE HUMAN SENSES onscreen) was the first of the series to be produced under the lavish auspices of Jack Warner, and the Rhino transfers of these outings are gorgeous, flawless, Technicolor confections. This segment, like most of the Warner productions, was directed by Owen Crump, best-known to genre fans for his atmospheric

Robert Bloch adaptation, THE COUCH (1961). Beginning with this film, Dr. Baxter is taken out of his production lab and placed in other (increasingly surreal) environments-in this case, a television studio, where a second Magic Screen is conveniently available. The screen begins with a live-action lookback at Aristotle (who's having his hair cut by Billy Barty!), then demonstrates the five basic senses (and countless secondary senses like balance and temperature) via some whimsical Chuck Jones animation, one of the many bonuses of working on the Warners lot, A 35mm camera is dismantled to show its similarities to the human eye, and human binocular vision is contrasted with the 360° vision of chameleons. In Carlson's absence, Baxter's Everyman sounding-board is his show's own production crew, portrayed by a number of familiar-looking, uncredited actors (the cinematographer is Karl Swenson, later the "End of the World" drunk in Hitchcock's THE BIRDS).

GATEWAYS is the most elementary of the BELL SCIENCE tapes, and also one of the most enjoyable; it's the best starting-point for young viewers.

THE ALPHABET CONSPIR-ACY (1959), produced by Crump and directed by Robert Sinclairbest-known for his Gracie Allen comedy MR. AND MRS. NORTH (1942)—is a quantum leap in weirdness. A studious little girl falls asleep and dreams of joining The Mad Hatter (Hans Conried, of course) and The Jabberwock in an attempt to destroy the alphabet, sharing their belief that there are too many words. Dr. Baxter, strolling outside the girl's house, somehow enters into her dream to describe the marvels of language, the mysteries of communication, and the physical mechanics of human speech. Along the way, there's some Friz Freleng animation and a mad tea party where the Hatter tries to baffle Dr. Baxter with the jarring dialects of a New York theatrical agent, a Texas cowboy, and jazz musician Shorty Rogers (who later arranged "Daydream Believer" and other hits for The Monkees)! To hear Dr. Frank C. Baxter converse in Beatnik is to die. There's also a cogent explanation of how the movies came to talk. A must for fans of THE 5,000 FINGERS OF DR. T.

finds Dr. Baxter, without explanation, in an observatory on Planet Q. The King of Q (Les Tremayne) has decided to introduce clocks to his planet, but regal flunky Richard Deacon (no, I'm not making this up) doesn't know where to place the hour hand. With the help of

Warners animators Phil Monroe and Maurice Noble, Dr. Baxter instructs the two aliens on the history of chronography and the ultimate arbitrary nature of Time itself. The production values here are exceptional, but the format is somewhat tedious and the material noticeably less infectious than that of its predecessors. The BELL SCIENCE series was succumbing to entropy.

OUR MR. SUN closes with some rudimentary information about the "new" phenomenon of solar energy, which raises an interesting question. After 35 years, is the BELL SCIENCE series still pertinent as science, or has it dated into mere nostalgia? These tapes do present a strange world, where calculators are immense consoles, and where outer space is described as a "place we've never been," but to compare this primitive-looking world with the discoveries we've made in the meantime is, in itself, intellectually bracing. And, of course, the essential lessons of these tapes remain truthfully intact. Nostalgia? Certainly, but the real currency of these tapes-beyond their informational value—is their vivid sense of wonder, something which few filmmakers can seldom stimulate today without images of war. The BELL SCIENCE series reminds us that ideas, too, can be explosive in the hands of the right storyteller.

By the time you read this, two more BELL SCIENCE tapes should be available from Rhino— UNCHAINED GODDESS and THREAD OF LIFE—and there is a promise of many more to come. This leaves us, much like Mr. Chameleon, in the happy position of being able to look fondly back and excitedly ahead at the same time.

- BLOOD OF DRACULA
- HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER
- I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN
- I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF

1957-8, RCA/Columbia, HF, \$29.95 each

This Herman Cohen quartet originally released by AIP and now available as part of RCA/Columbia's "Drive-In Classics" seriesnow seems to encapsulate '50s horror in America better than anything that Roger Corman cranked out during the same period. In these four films, the horror genre can be seen stirring back to life, having discovered in societally-outcast monsters a symbol for misunderstood youth. Though made over a short period, this Teenage Monster cycle was so perfect that it peaked almost immediately, climaxing with a minor masterpiece of narcissistic satire.

The first of the series, **BLOOD** OF DRACULA, is a kind of "Vampire Without a Cause" in which a reasonably rebellious teen (Sandra Harrison)—her father has remarried only six weeks after her mother's death-is placed in a private girl's school, where an ambitious science instructor (Louise Lewis) uses her short temper for vague experiments with transformation at their core. Directed by Herbert L. Strock, this film has an undeservedly bad reputation. It is the cheapest of the bunch (one transformation scene is clumsily repeated), the finale is hurried and awkward and, in retrospect, the story is only a rough draft for I WAS A TEENAGE WERE-WOLF; nevertheless, its characterizations are dimensional and most of its set-pieces are wellplanned. RCA/Columbia's transfer is excellent, though we suspect a scene may be missing. Wasn't there originally a scene of Harrison's *fiance* Eddie (Don Devlin) trying to visit her at school and being ordered offgrounds by the protective Lewis? (The confrontation is still mentioned in later dialogue...) Jerry Blaine, who sings "Puppy Love" at a god-awfully choreographed slumber party, later narrated Ronnie Ashcroft's THE ASTOUNDING SHE MONSTER.

One of the great genre titles, I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF sounds like a satire but, under the sober guidance of director Gene Fowler Jr., sustains its quality simply by respecting its own potential as entertainment. Michael Landon stars as Tony, a good boy whose short fuse is marshalled by

a school psychologist (Whit Bissell) who encourages his violence under hypnosis toward a cathartic metamorphosis. The dynamics of this relationship—authority abusing the youth it envies—is at the root of the film's best moments, evaluating Landon's lycanthropy with the incapacitations that can result from so-called male maturation rituals. It's to Landon's credit that he never denied the importance of this film to his career and, indeed, this is not a film to be ashamed of: Vladimir Sokaloff's effective cameo—in the role of the expatriate Transylvanian janitor "Pepi" (!)—is the perfect illustration of how well this brooding little film transcended its given architecture. Ken Miller (the guy pictured on the sleeve of RHINO'S GUIDE TO SAFE SEX) sings a Jerry Blaine number, "Eeny Meeny

Miney Mo," wildly out of tempo a scene frequently cut from commercial TV prints—and Louise Lewis pops up again, this time as the school principal.

Herbert Strock returned to the series with I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN, which is much seamier stuff and—despite quality components, like Whit Bissell's definitive performance and his eminently quotable dialogue ("Speak up! You've got a civil tongue in your head, I sewed it there myself!")—doesn't stitch together as well as its predecessor. Again, the film is most interesting for its use of Dr. Frankenstein as a dominating parental figure to be rebelled against, and for its presentation of the teenage creature (Gary Conway)'s mangled ugliness as a kind of extreme complexion

Robert H. Harris shows an AIP security guard that the studio system is a crock in HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER (1958).



problem. The influence of the Hammer films is also apparent, with an array of body parts that was quite shocking for its time—can anyone forget the severed head in the birdcage? In one of AIP's favorite exploitation tricks of the period, the climax of this B&W unfolds in a surprise of Color; on tape, the color is mostly pale blue and pink, but it's there, available for the first time since the film's theatrical playdates over 30 years ago.

As for HOW TO MAKE A MON-STER, you can keep BARTON FINK; this is our choice for the bravest and most entertaining film ever made about the Hollywood studio system. The film steers the confessional perspective of the two earlier titles into the realm of real confession. At American International Studios in Hollywood (where we are told HOR-RORS OF THE BLACK MU-SEUM-actually a British feature!-is now in production), veteran horror makeup artist Pete Drummond (Robert H. Harris) is given his pink slip because "Monsters are out, Musicals are in." (We are given a shuddery glimpse of things to come when John Ashley fingerpops his way through "You Gotta Have Eee-Ooo!"another musical scene commonly cut from TV prints, herein preserved for the ages.) By adding a brainwashing narcotic to his base, Drummond makeup hypnotizes the actors playing Teenage Frankenstein and Werewolf (Gary Conway and Gary Clarke, replacing Michael Landon) to kill the AIP execs, portrayed as little more than common thugs. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent. Sadly, RCA/Columbia's tape doesn't present the film's fiery climax in color, as it was seen in theaters, but this is the only shortcoming of an otherwise essential release.



Producer Herman Cohen admires his teenage twins in this publicity shot for HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER.

THE BRIDE WORE BLACK

1966, MGM/UA, HF, \$19.98

François Truffaut directed this captivating, if antiseptic adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's seminal noir novel, first published in 1940. Jeanne Moreau is the enigmatic heroine, an avenging angel bent on evening the score with five men inadvertently to blame for her husband's death on her wedding day. (If this premise sounds familiar, you may be thinking of Jess Franco's unofficial remakes THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z [Miss Muerte, 1966] and MRS. HYDE [Sie Tötete in Ekstase, "Six Deaths in Ecstacy," 1970].) One gets the sense that Truffaut saw this project less as a personal statement than as a vehicle for paying hommage to his master, Alfred Hitchcock; everything about it, not least of all Bernard Herrmann's lyrically mournful score, suggests the slice of cake as opposed to the slice of life. The coldness isn't inappropriate—it is, after all, about the death of emotion, an Antarctica of the heart—it's simply on the surface it should have been under. Truffaut's other Woolrich adaptation—the less well-known, but equally intriguing MISSISSIPPI MERMAID [Le Sirène du Mississippi, 1966], based on the 1947 novel WALTZ INTO DARKNESS—is also now available from MGM/UA at the same price. Both films are in French with English subtitles.

FEMALE JUNGLE

1956, RCA/Columbia, HF, \$29.95

From an uninformed distance, this 56m noir item—padded to saleable length with trailers—might have seemed the most disappointing choice among RCA's initial batch of AIP "Drive-In Classics," but one viewing will win you over. Filmed in real time, the story documents the hour that passes after the murder of an actress outside a seedy L.A. liquor dive, as

an alcoholic detective (Lawrence Tierney) struggles with his own blackout and evidence that suggests he may have been the maniac responsible. Director Bruno Ve Sota (who co-directed the similarly atmospheric **DEMENTIA** aka DAUGHTER OF HORROR the previous year, and appears briefly as a waitress' husband) presents an astonishingly detailed and believable portrait of a neighborhood business and its bizarre regulars, the most memorable of whom is John Carradine's intimidating aesthete-isn't that his HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN wardrobe he's wearing? Supporting roles are filled-out by the likes of Jayne Mansfield (in her first role), Gordon Urquhart (the future screenwriter of THE BRAIN EATERS; this film is so perverse, he doesn't play Lt. Urguhart!), and Jack Hill (no, not that Jack Hill). Recommended.

HEARTS OF DARKNESS: A FILMMAKER'S APOCALYPSE

10/91, Showtime, HF-S

This engrossing record of the filming of Francis Ford Coppola's APOCALYPSE NOW (1979) combines original documentary footage by Eleanor Coppola-narrated with readings from her soonto-be-republished shooting diary NOTES-and new interview footage. Without knowledge of the events portrayed, it might be hard to tell whether this was an accurate chronicle, or a MAD Magazine parody of the filmmaking process. All the infamous anecdotes are here (the replacement of Harvey Keitel, the filming of Martin Sheen's 36th birthday drunk, his heart attack, etc.), along with numerous audio recordingsmade without Coppola's knowledge-which offer a brutally honest portrait of an artist, millions of dollars in debt, who insists on



Francis Coppola directs an early scene of APOCALYPSE NOW in the superb documentary, HEARTS OF DARKNESS (1991).

having his "vision" prevail though he has nothing to say. His \$3,000,000 star, Marlon Brando, has even less to say and an outstanding highlight of this film are outtakes from his improvised soliloquies, as these two blank screens goad each other toward the condition of cinema. Fascinating, letterboxed clips are also included from a few deleted sequences. The only real shortcomings are an absence of clips featuring Keitel, and the fact that a 96m running time can't very well reflect the misery of a 16-week shoot that became 34; we'd love to see the original rough cut, reportedly 31/2 hours.

IN THE REALM OF PASSION

1979, Fox Lorber, HF, \$89.95

Nagasi Oshima (MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. LAWRENCE) directed this sublimely eerie, sumptuously produced ghost story set in 1895 Japan, about a

man (Tatsuya Fuji) whose jealousy over his married lover (Kazuko Yoshiyuki) leads to the murder of her rickshaw-driving husband and the concealment of his corpse in a disused well. The scenes of Kazuko's haunting—her dead husband wanting his evening sake, or his phantom rickshaw appearing on a foggy night to take her home ("I'm going there anyway," the ghost mentions)—are stunning in their beauty and horror, making this title an absolute must for all true connoisseurs of the fantastic. This film spends much more time in the realm of guilt than the title suggests; considering Nagasi's reputation as an erotic director, there's comparatively little passion on display. Also available from Fox Lorber (at the same price) is Nagasi's frightening hardcore study of sexual obsession, IN THE REALM OF THE SENSES (1976), also starring Tatsuya; it is uncut and rated NC-17.

J'ACCUSE

1936, Connoisseur, HF, \$59.95

Abel Gance's inspiring antiwar diatribe-a remake of his 1918 Armistice silent, filmed amid the flowering of fascism in '30s Europe—is made even more powerful with this newly restored 125m version—53m longer than its previous 72m 22s release from Sinister Cinema. In brief, the added footage was culled from various sources, resulting in a patchwork of uneven sound and image quality, even the look of the subtitles changes from scene to scene, but all this is forgivable in light of its ultimate value. This symphonic masterpiece has received some ink in the horror press in recent years for being a "zombie" film, on the grounds of its crescendo of reanimated war dead, but this is only the anticlimax of a film dominated by the

electrifying performance of Victor Francen (THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS), as a WWI survivor struggling to keep a promise to his dead compatriots that there must be no more wars. A devastating testament to how eloquent, persuasive, and loud an artist's voice can be, and still not be heard.

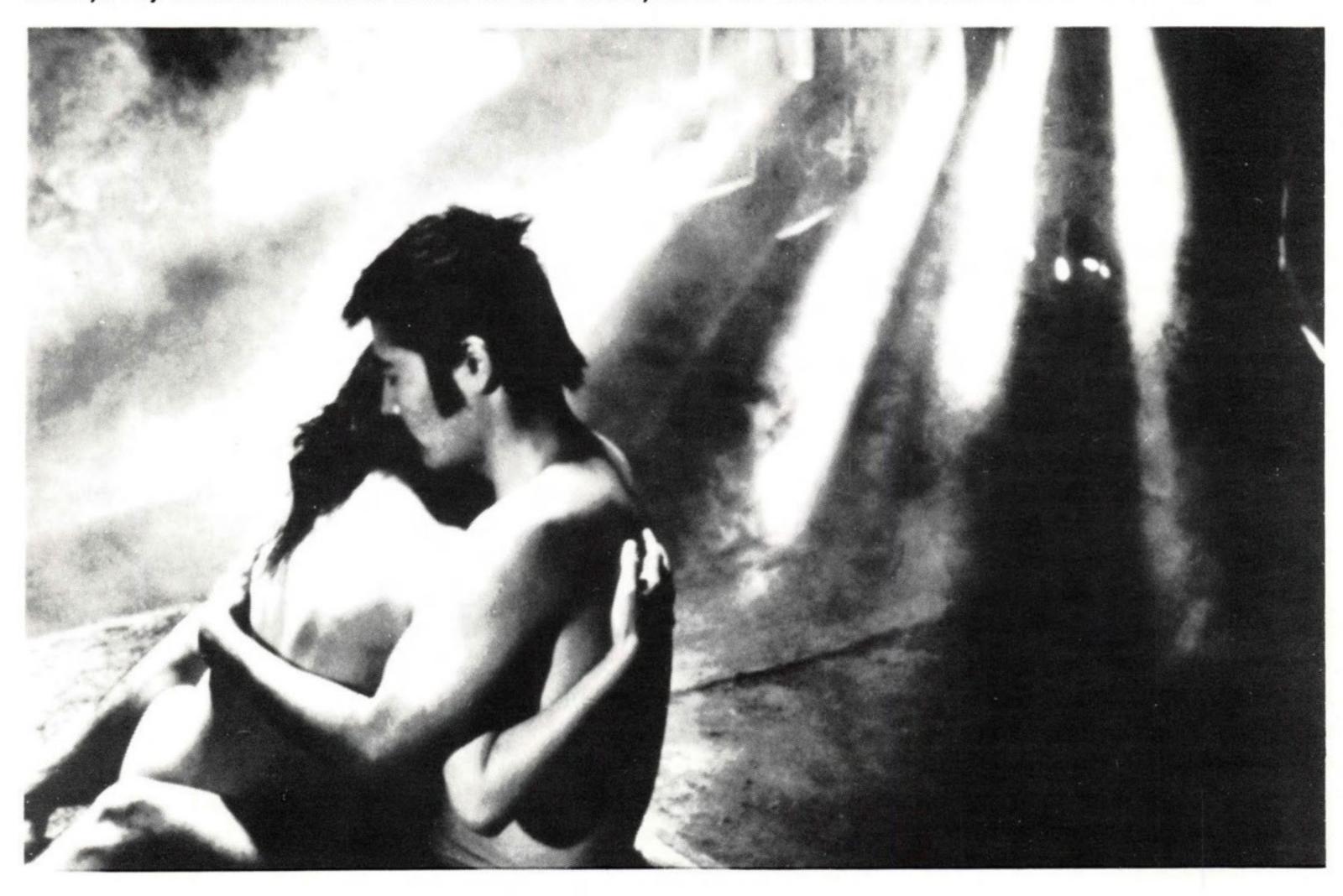
MADHOUSE

1974, HBO Video, HF, \$59.95

Vincent Price stars as Paul Toombes, a suave horror star renowned for his "Doctor Death" films, who abandons the role after the hideous murder of his fiancée. When Toombes is lured into reprising the role many years later, similar killings begin to haunt the production and threaten his sanity. This American International/Amicus co-production—Price's final film for AIP—is poorly directed but still worth seeing, not

least of all for Price's candid performance; it may not be his TAR-GETS, but it's the TARGETS of his AIP years. The finale, in which Price disguises himself as co-star Peter Cushing, is one of the most astonishing fade-outs in the genre—not only for George Blackler's convincing makeup, but for Price's willingness to sublimate his unique persona so completely. Based on Angus Hall's novel DEVILDAY, the film also features memorable supporting performances by Adrienne Corri and Natasha Pyne. This film was only briefly released when new, and HBO Video didn't bother to mention its release to their publicists! Two other Price films are being made available by HBO (with the same Price-tag): Roger Corman and Richard Matheson's handsome H. P. Lovecraft adaptation THE HAUNTED PALACE (1963, scenes from which appear in

Tatsuya Fuji consoles haunted widow Kazuko Yoshiyuki in the eerie IN THE REALM OF PASSION (1979).





Horror triumverate Robert Quarry, Peter Cushing, and Vincent Price in a scene deleted from the engrossing AIP rarity, MADHOUSE (1974).

MADHOUSE) and Jeremy Summers' THE HOUSE OF 1000 DOLLS (1965), a Francoesque white slavery saga—produced by Harry Alan Towers—that looks more interesting now than it did when new.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

1991, Orion, HF/SS-S/CC, NSR

One of the most popular films produced this year, this superlative adaptation of Thomas Harris' best-selling novel hardly requires an introduction here. When a series of sadistic murders point to a common perpetrator, FBI trainee Clarisse Starling (Jodie Foster) is recruited to glean whatever infor-

mation she can from imprisoned serial killer Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). It's a tribute to Jonathan Demme's direction, not to mention the film's fine performances, that the generally static first half is so riveting. Foster plays her part behind a deliberate façade, hiding from her peers the traces of "poor white trash" Lecter is quick to detect, using a brave face that seems always on the verge of tears; meanwhile, stationary in his glass cage, Hopkins uses his voice like a skeleton key to trip her (and our) emotional locks, veering from icy monotony to provocative stabs of jazz-as in his much-quoted line, "I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti." Theirs

is a meeting of masks. Intelligent, multi-faceted, and suspenseful, this film has been cropped for video from its original Panavision (2.35:1) framing, a fact that is not overly destructive until Foster's nerve-rattling scenic tour of serial killer Buffalo Bill's domain. Furthermore, Image Entertainment has announced that the laserdisc release will *not* be letterboxed.

THE SNAKE WOMAN

1960, Cinemacabre Video, \$20.95 (1st Class), \$18.95 (4th Class)

Dr. Adderson, researching the curative uses of snake venom, injects regular doses into his ailing pregnant wife, who dies after giving birth to a cold-blooded

daughter. The child, born without eyelids, matures into a young woman (Susan Travers, the harelipped model of PEEPING TOM) who haunts the Northumberland moors like a myth made flesh, transfixing her victims as she metamorphoses into a deadly King Cobra. Directed by Sidney J. Furie (DR. BLOOD'S COFFIN) and scripted by Orville Hampton (THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE), this cheap British production—heavy on the Scotland Yard investigation—is talky to the point of interrupting its dialogue to lend false urgency to otherwise dull scenes ("Then he said..." "Said what?"), but has some good moments, particularly its HORRIBLE DR. HICHCOCK-like prelude and the discovery еегіе of Travers' sloughed-off human skin. A rare title, SNAKE WOMAN was considered lost until George Stover located this somewhat abbreviated (66m) print. A true curio, available exclusively from: Cinemacabre Video, PO Box 10005, Baltimore MD, 21285-0005. Checks accepted, money orders preferred.

THE TERMINATOR

1984, Hemdale Video, HF, \$14.95

This sell-through reissue is an essential purchase for anyone owning this film's previous release on Thorn/EMI Video. Thorn's transfer was time-compressed to 102m 6s; it is herein restored to its original 106m 15s running time and is a conspicuously different viewing experience. The box mistakenly reports that this reissue is in Hi-Fi Stereo, but the film was released to theaters in a monophonic sound-mix and, thankfully, has not been remixed (à la CBS/ Fox's THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL). Also available on laserdisc from Image Entertainment in a letterboxed edition.



Canada

CHASSEUR DE L'ENFER

(*The Hunter from Hell, * 1980) Plaisirs Vidéo

This is a somewhat retitled version of Jess Franco's cannibal opus, THE MANHUNTER (aka MANDINGO MANHUNTER), which is identical to the uncut Venezuelan version, El Cazador de Hombre. The onscreen title is DEVIL HUNTER (the film's British release title), though the film itself is in French without subtitles.

LA COMTESSE IXE

("Countess Ixe," 1976) Climax Vidéo

Known in its native France as La Comtesse X, this is one of Jean Rollin's excursions into hardcore adult films under his "Michel Gentil" pseudonym, starring Alban Cerdy. French fantasy film critic Jean-Pierre Bouyxou (who wrote often about Rollin's films for such publications as STARS-SYSTEM) serves as assistant director.

COSA AVETE FATTO A SOLANGE?

("What Have You Done to Solange?," 1972) CVR

YOUR GRAVE is featured in this Massimo Dallamano film, about genital mutilation murders at a boarding school for young women. It was co-produced by



We review the Italian version, but here's the Spanish poster art for the German co-production WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE? (1972).

Germany's Rialto Film and passed off in that country as an adaptation of Edgar Wallace's novel "The Clue of the New Pin," entitled **Das Geheimnis der Grunen Stecknadel** ("The Secret of the Green Pins"). This is the Italian-language version, which runs 107m and is letterboxed to an approximation of its original 2.05:1 (70mm) ratio. Photographed by Aristide Massachesi—Joe D'Amato!

GATTI ROSSI IN UN LABIRINTO DI VETRO

("Red Cat in the Labyrinth of Glass," 1978) CVR

This Umberto Lenzi film is available as EYEBALL (an incom-

plete, cropped edition) from Prism Video in the US, but this letter-boxed, Italian-language version contains a different opening credits sequence and the onscreen title is THE SECRET KILLER. With John Richardson, Martine Brochard, and Silvia Solar.

LA MORT AU LARGE

("Death in the Open Sea," 1982) Parade Vidéo

This French-language release offers a rare opportunity to see Enzo G. Castellari's GREAT WHITE [L'ultimo squalo, "The Last Jaws"], which was promptly withdrawn from US release after Universal Pictures successfully

prosecuted its producers for copyright infringement. It stars the late James Franciscus and Vic Morrow and is letterboxed.

France

BLOODY GIRL

World Video/American Video, LB, 99F

This tape, with its English title, is a retitling of Malenka, la nipote del vampiro ("Malenka, The Vampire's Niece"), the 1968 directorial debut of Amando De Ossorio, who also scripted. Its Gothic atmosphere and ladies in transparent negligées suggest a remake of Browning's MARK OF THE VAMPIRE, done in the Hammer style. While the ladies-notably Diana Lorys and Audrey Ambert (Adriana Ambesi)—are gorgeous, male leads John Hamilton (Gianni Medici) and Julian Ugarte haven't even a quarter of Christopher Lee or Peter Cushing's charisma. Anita Ekberg, who stars as a woman who inherits the castle of her vampiric ancestor, doesn't help matters with her heavy Rimmel eyelashes. Franco regular Paul Muller also appears, for perhaps 10s, simply to answer the telephone! The soundtrack and dialogue of the last 2m don't fit at all what is onscreen (the vampire's face melting, à la Roy Ashton), suggesting that two different endings were shot. Released theatrically in the US as FANGS OF THE LIVING DEAD.

LA SECTE DE L'HORREUR

("The Horror Sect") America Video, 99F

The box carries the credits of Jess Franco's **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF**, but inside is Joseph W. Sarno's **VEIL OF BLOOD** aka **THE**

TERS, filmed in Switzerland circa 1972. The plot involves vampiric orgies taking place in beautiful castle locations, but the film is more erotic than horrific. The cover design also shows, as a background, a drawing of the monster that was added to the climax of Jacques Tourneur's CURSE OF THE DEMON (1956)!

VAMPIRE, LA MALÉDICTION DU CHATEAU D'ANDOMAI

("Vampire: The Curse of Andomai's Castle")

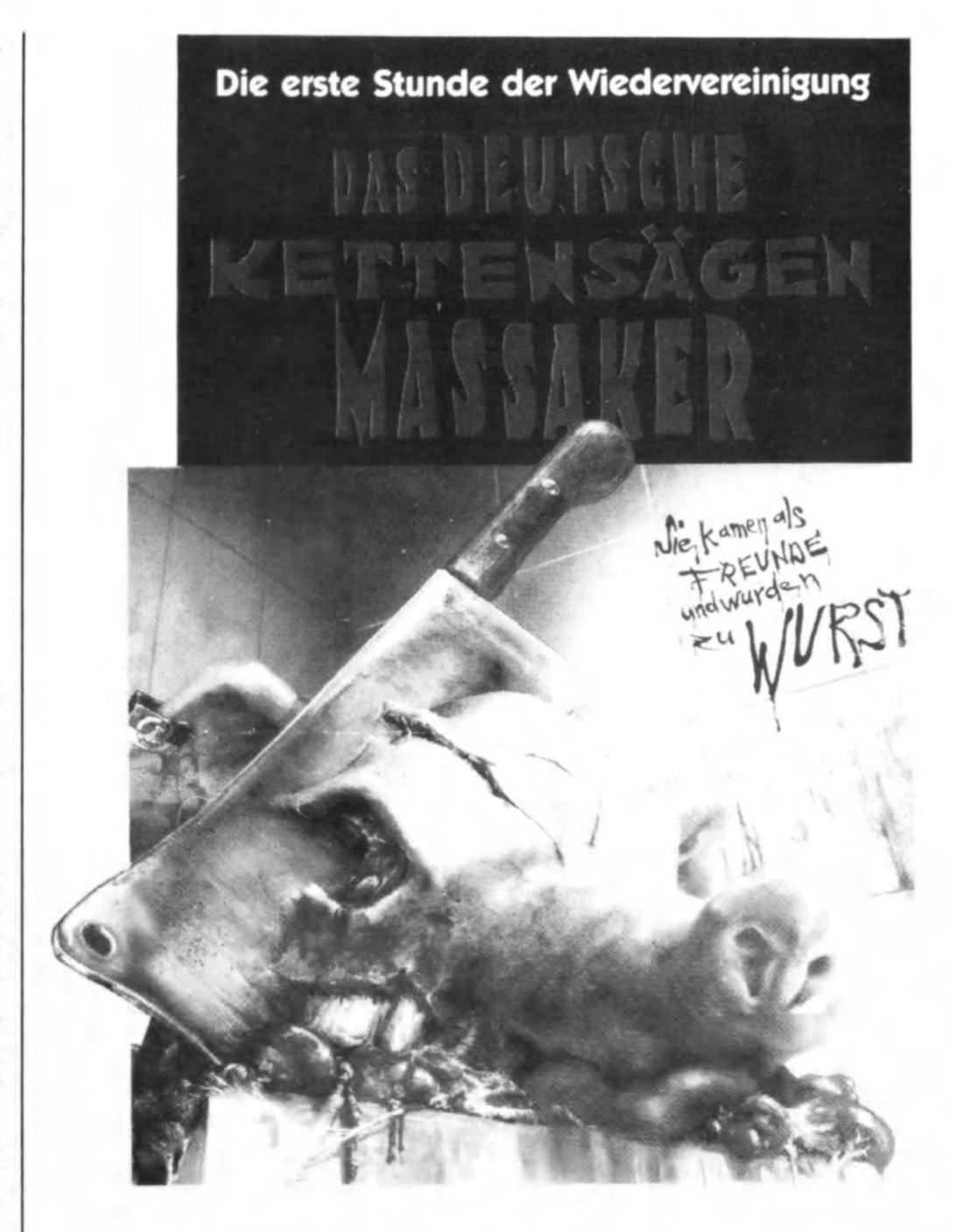
This is a silly retitling of Harald Reinl's Die Schlangengrube und das Pendel ("The Snakepit and the Pendulum," 1967)—a PD eyesore on video labels in the US, where it has been sold as BLOOD DEMON, CURSE OF THE WALK-ING DEAD and THE TORTURE CHAMBER OF DR. SADISM. This film, quite well-regarded in Germany due to the presence of Lex Barker (a top boxoffice draw there), was previously released on tape in France as Le Vampire et le Sang des Vierges ("The Vampire and the Virgin's Blood"), by Carrère Vidéo.

Germany

DAS DEUTSCHE KETTENSÄGEN MASSAKER

("The German Chainsaw Massacre," 1991) Filmgalerie 451, NSR

Underground filmmaker Christoph Schlingensief, seeing that all three TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE films are banned from theaters and home video in Germany, decided it's time to have a new massacre legally avail-



able. After the opening of the Berlin wall, East Germans invade the west and perish painfully under the handsaws of a strange family living in an abandoned industrial area. Schlingensief is known for his mixtures of plain B-movie style and artistic overtones which, unfortunately, often dominate his films and make them pathetic. The same goes for this latest item, featuring a bogus (Ido Kier among a cast of Fassbinder veterans and other oddities. Boring and pretentious.

GATES OF HELL

1991, New Vision Video, NSR

This latest Umberto Lenzi film

is credited to his "Humphrey Humbert" pseudonym, and scripted by his daughter Olga Pehar Lenzi. The story, equally derived from Amando de Ossorio's "Blind Dead" Quartet and Michele Soavi's THE CHURCH [La chiesa, 1988], concerns a group of seven scientists struggling for their lives in the subterranean caverns of an ancient chapel, against an equal number of zombie monks who were killed in the 13th Century for Satanic worship. This version, which includes only slight gore but handled in a very exploitative way, appears to be uncut. The dubbing is hilarious, the script is riddled with generic clichés (the scientists

split up to be murdered one by one), and the sets are cheap, with fire and smoke constantly emerging in a vain attempt to liven things up. The finale is borrowed from Fulci's own GATES OF HELL [Paura nella città dei morti viventi, "Fear in the City of the Living Dead," 1980]. Unbelievably bad but, as such, very entertaining.



DEMONIA

1990, Playtime

This film, produced in Sicily in 1989, threatened to be lost forever when director Lucio Fulci declared that he would never allow its release until he had been paid. Brett Halsey and Meg Register star in this tale of a woman's possession by a 14th Century spirit, with Fulci himself appearing in a few scenes as "Inspector Carter"—complete with COLOMBO-style trenchcoat! The effects are unusually cheaplooking—the one exception is a scene in which a man is quartered by trees, which tops the one in Ruggero Deodato's Inferno in diretta [VW 1:45-46]—but retain Fulci's usual viciousness, particularly the crucifixion of some nuns, and the meathook killing of a butcher, whose tongue is then nailed to the carving table for good measure. The film is cropped to 1.33:1 and runs 84m 40s.

JUSTINE

1975

Released anonymously on an unknown hardcore video label, this turns out to be Jess Franco's

Juliette aka La Suceuse ["The Sucking Woman"], an adaptation of DeSade starring Lina Romay, Alice Arno, and French film journalist Alain Petit. Franco directs under the pseudonym "Dave Tough," but this version—"presented and supervised" by Joe D'Amato!—is re-edited and reportedly does not reflect the director's intentions. Letterboxed with a running time of 81m.

LA RAGAZZA CHE SAPPEVA TROPPO

("The Girl Who Knew Too Much") 1962, Fonit Cetra, approx. \$18

This is the original Italian version of Mario Bava's seminal giallo, released in re-edited form (with additional comic sequences) in the US and England as EVIL EYE in 1964. The box features a reproduction of an original lobby card, but the 1.85:1 image is cropped to 1.33:1. This version, which runs only 82m, is the complete European version which includes alternate dialogue in some scenes, a Roberto Nicolosi score including an actual theme song (which Les Baxter completely rescored for AIP), and an ending different to the English-language version; it also lacks several comic sequences included in that export edition.

VOCI DAL PROFONDO

("Voices from the Deep")
1990, Empire

Another recent Lucio Fulci release is this horror/drama about a despotic family man (Duilio del Prete), who dies of a supposed stomach hemorrhage, and appears as a ghost to prompt his daughter (Karina Huff) to find out who poisoned him and how. The investigation is frequently interrupted by nightmarish, hallucinatory sequences, showing how unloved the character was, but also the remorse felt by his survivors. Fulci appears in a cameo as a forensic surgeon. Cropped to 1.33:1, the film runs approximately 87m.

Venezuela

HOMBRE SE NACE, POLICIA SE MUERE

("Live Like a Man, Die Like a Cop," 1976)

Ray Lovelock and Marc Porel portray two completely amoral, psychotic cops in this incredible Ruggero Deodato film, routinely maiming—even killing!-suspects, no matter how petty the crime. At one point, the boys take to the streets and murder five suspects in an armored car robbery and, in the highlight of the film, Porel breaks the neck of a purse snatcher! The worst comeuppance they receive is an occasional ass-chewing by police chief Adolfo Celi. An episodic approach is taken toward plot, as Lovelock and Porel slowly close-in on the crimelord responsible for the death of a colleague. Unlike the **DIRTY HARRY** series which must have inspired it, no hint of moralizing ever appears, but Deodato's slick direction makes even the most outrageous set-pieces glide by. In English with Spanish subtitles.

LO MUERTA ESPERA

("Awaited Death," 1972)

Before Romolo Scavolini won notoriety in this country for NIGHTMARE (1981), he worked in Italy as a director/screenwriter of Spaghetti westerns and horror



In 1964, AIP released this alternative version of Mario Bava's LA RAGAZZA CHE SAPPEVA TROPPO (1962).

films like this one. Evelyn Stewart plays a woman who is murdered, with her lover, by a jealous husband in the presence of their and impressionable young daughter. Twenty years later, the daughter (also Stewart) is married to an abusive husband (Luigi Pistilli), who invites friends over to witness her beatings-until she turns the tables on him, with the help of her deceased Mom. Lots of bad 1970's fashions and gratuitous nudity can't help this thriller, which is in Italian with Spanish subtitles.

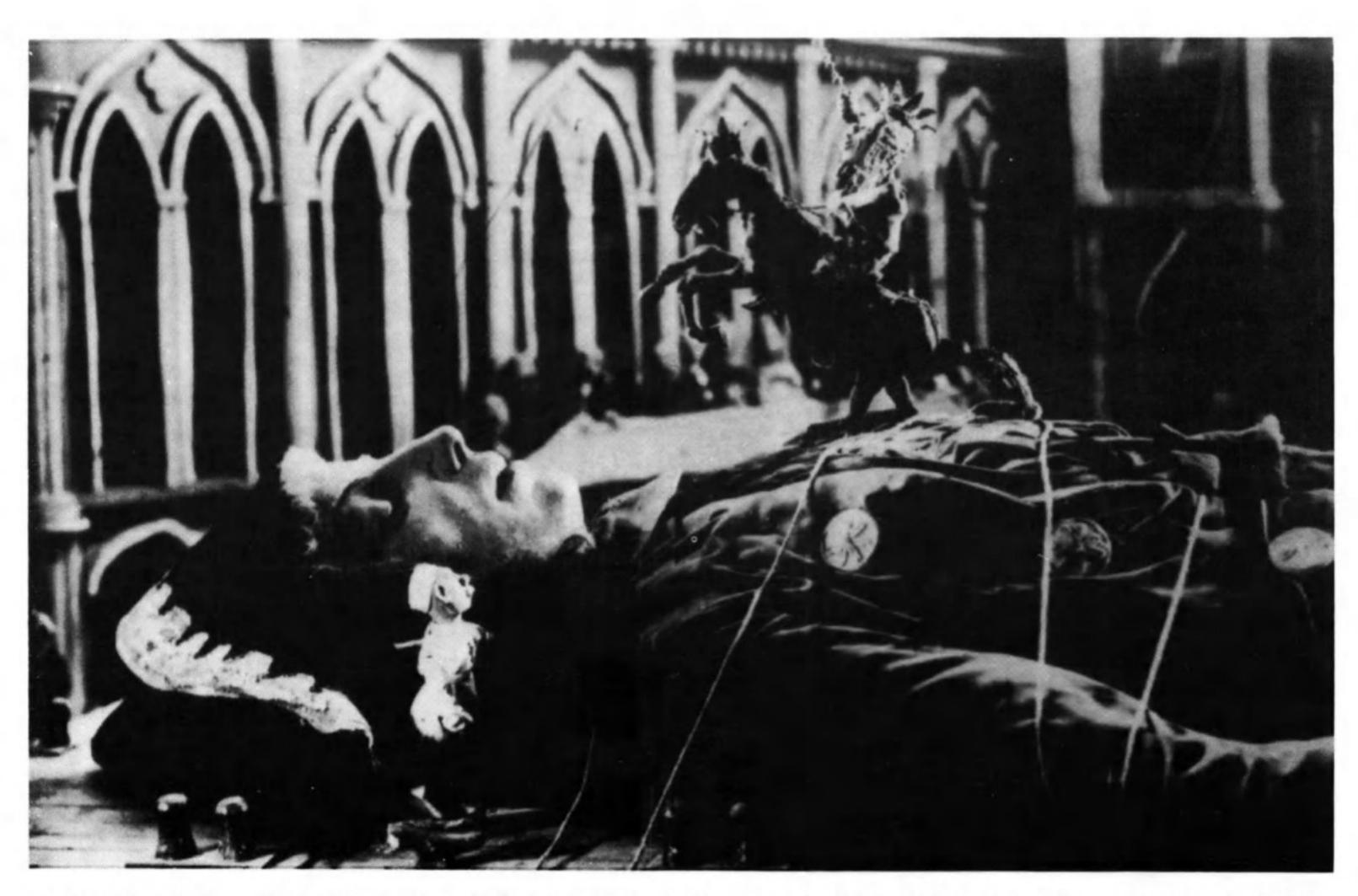
LA SEMANA DEL ASSASINO

("The Wages of a Killer," 1972)

Vincente Parra stars as a desensitized slaughterhouse worker who snaps when a cab driver objects to his backseat kissing with his girlfriend (Emma Cohen) and kills him, leading him to kill a virtual chain of disapproving people, starting with Cohen herself. A neighbor from across the street (Eusebio Poncela) witnesses some of the killings and, recognizing a kindred spirit, decides to befriend Parra. Director Eloy de la Iglesias would have us believe, because Poncela's character is gay, that he can sympathize with the actions of a serial killer—not a very enlightened viewpoint, even for the Swinging '70s! Also known as THE APARTMENT ON THE 13TH FLOOR and CANNIBAL MAN, under which title the film was banned in the UK as a "video nasty." This is the 98m version, reportedly shortened from an original 120m length. In 1.85:1, in Spanish without subtitles.

Russkaya Jantastika

Part One



Gulliver (V. Konstantinov) is captured by Lilipuppets in the world's first animated feature, NOVY GULLIVER ("The New Gulliver," 1935).

By Alan Upchurch



MONG THE GREAT UNCHARTED

waters of world cinema lies the little known and seldom visited world of the Russo-Soviet fantasy film. The meager distribution of Soviet films in general in the West is itself a sad story, and doubly so for the fantasy film, which has a long tradition of extraordinary craftsmen and unique forms. Much like the French notion of *le fantastique*, the Russian *fantastika* is a more comprehensive term than we have in English. It embraces the horror film (*film uzhasov*), the science fiction film (*nauchno-fantastichesky film*) and the fairytale or folktale film (*film-skazka*). ¹

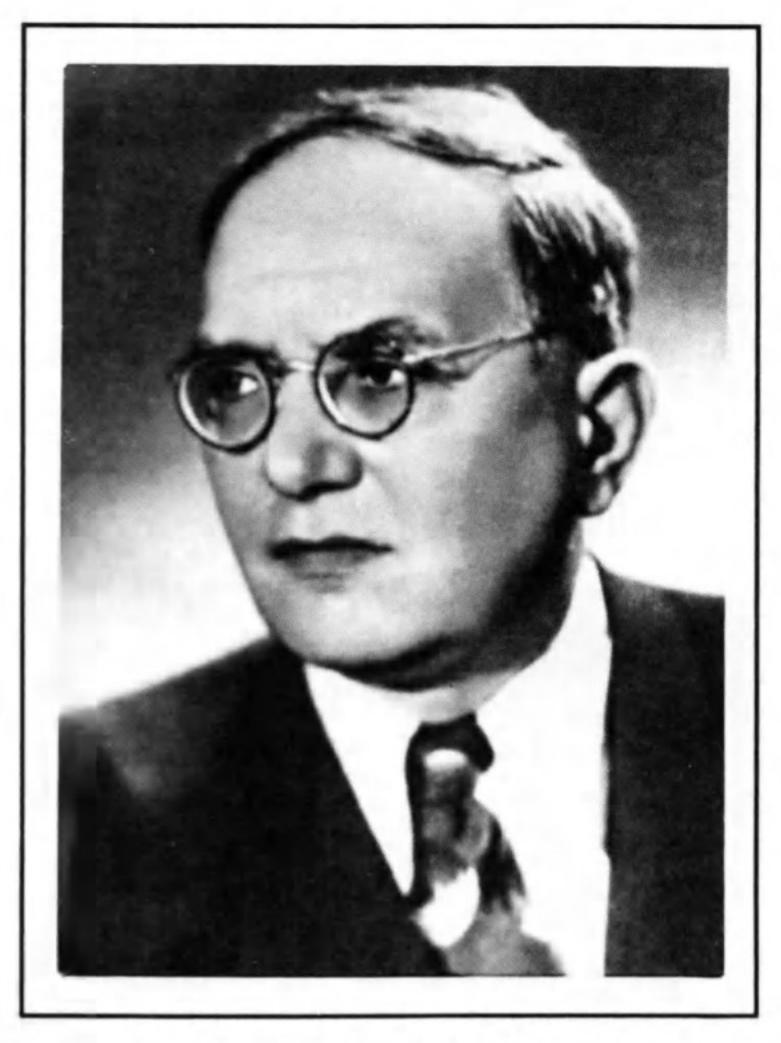
Of the three categories the horror film is certainly the rarest in the Soviet Union. This might at first seem surprising, given that horror existed in pre-

The Fairytale Landscapes of Aleksandr Ptushko

revolutionary Russian literature as a popular genre, much influenced by its development in European literature, but horror was best known to Russian readers in translations. The works of E.T.A. Hoffmann, for example, have always enjoyed enormous popularity in Russia and remain in print to the present day. Among Russian writers who wrote horror fiction were Aleksey K. Tolstoy (whose tale of incestuous vampirism, "La Famille du Vourdalak," served as the basis for two Italian horror films: Mario Bava's BLACK SABBATH [I tre volti della paura, 1963] and Giorgio Ferroni's NIGHT OF THE DEVILS [La notte del diavoli, 1972]; see VW #5: 49-52) and Nikolay Gogol (whose story "The Viy" has been filmed three times in Russia, and once in Italy).

It is probably no coincidence that the handful of authentic horror films that have been made in the Soviet Union are based on foreign classics and usually take place in the West: Oscar Wilde's THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY and R.L. Stevenson's THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, for example, have both been made into Soviet films. In fact, Soviet film critics have often pointed to the Western horror film as a sign of the moral decay of capitalist societies (Siegfried Kracauer's FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER enjoys a certain cachet among these simplistic pseudo-Marxist philosophers).

The science-fiction film has fared a little better. Its roots too lay in translations of science-fiction literature of the West (Jules Verne, H.G. Wells) but, earlier on, developed its own national stylistics. Thus there are films based on Soviet science-fiction literature ranging from Aleksey N. Tolstoy (Protozanov's silent film Aelita, 1924) through Aleksandr R. Belyayev (THE AMPHIBIAN MAN [Chelovek-Amflbiya, 1962]) to the Strugatsky Brothers (Andrey Tarkovsky's STALKER, 1980). The first Soviet science-fiction film about interplanetary travel was the 1935 production Kozmichesky Reys ("Space Flight"), but it was the 1957 launching of Sputnik that resulted in a brief flurry of this type of film: the 1959 Ukrainian film Nebo Zovet ("The Heavens Call"), Mechte Navstrechu ("Towards the Dream," 1963) and 1962's Planeta Bur ("The Planet of Storms").2 Underwater exploration films



Aleksandr L. Ptushko, circa 1959.

also became popular: *Tayna Vechnoy Nochi* ("The Mystery of the Unending Night," 1956) and *Tatna Dvukh Okeanov* ("The Mystery of the Two Oceans," 1955-1957). Science-fiction films continued to be popular throughout the sixties and seventies and reached a sophisticated literacy in two of Andrey Tarkovsky's films: **SOLARIS** (1972) and the aforementioned **STALKER**.

It was in the field of the fairytale or folktale film, however, that Soviet film fantastika came into its own. The folk tale had long inspired the other arts before the creation of the film-skazka. The centuries-old tradition of oral story-telling became an object of intense interest and study by Russian philologists in the 19th century. As was the case in



Bratishkin, Ptushko's first puppet star.

other European cultures, this research resulted in a systematized compilation of folk tales in written form: Aleksandr N. Afanasev's RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES (1855). The Russian fairy tale served as the foundation for much of classical Russian literature. Many of Aleksandr Pushkin's narrative poems and the stories of Nikolay Gogol were literary retellings of Russian folktales.

From the very earliest Russian films, the fairy tale served as subject matter. Gogol's tales were frequently filmed: "The Viy," for example, was first filmed in 1909 by the director V. Goncharov. It was then made by the great Russian animator, Ladislav Starevich, in 1918. There were film versions of Pushkin's "Rusalka" in 1910, Mikhail Lermontov's "Demon" in 1911, and "The Snow Maiden" in 1914. It was in the 1930's and 1940's, however, that the fairytale film really blossomed, and with it there emerged two directors who were to make the greatest contributions to the genre: Aleksandr Rou and Aleksandr Ptushko.

Aleksandr Lukich Ptushko (1900-1973) belongs to that rare breed of filmmaker that the cinema engenders from time to time—the film magician. Like Mario Bava, William Cameron Menzies and George Pal, Ptushko was part tinkerer, part inventor and part artist whose fantastic imagination combined with a technological curiosity to produce



A shot from one of the early, unidentified Bratishkin shorts.



Ptushko with assistant animator Sarra Mokil on one of NOVY GULLIVER's fabulous miniature sets.

works of pure visual inventiveness. Ptushko's career can be divided into four discrete phases: his work in animation, his fairytale films, his heroic epic films and his literary adaptations.

Before entering film work, Ptushko graduated from Moscow's Institute of Economics and worked at various trades. He had been a school teacher, a journalist, an actor and stage designer. In 1927 he went to work at the Mosfilm Studio, the Soviet Union's largest and most prestigious studio, to participate in the making of a type of film that was actually native to Russia, having been invented in 1912 by Starevich-the three-dimensional stopmotion animated film, or "puppet film" (kukolny film) as they are commonly called in Russian. His first assignments were making the models for short puppet films by other directors. Almost immediately, he advanced to director of a series of silent animated shorts featuring a continuing character called Bratishkin. His first film as a director was Sluchay Na Stadione ("An Incident at the Stadium"), a comical film about the sports competition of 1928 in Moscow. Most of these early shorts were comical treatments of how the cinema was brought to the rural countryside, how Soviet power was replacing poor housing with modern apartments, and other social themes. Unfortunately, virtually all of these silent shorts have been lost.

Ptushko continued working on animated shorts, experimenting with new techniques of special effects (such as combining an animated puppet with live action footage of an actor in one frame) until 1933. Although we know for certain that he was familiar with some of Starevich's work (who had emigrated to France after the Revolution of 1917),⁴ Ptushko really reinvented the technique of stop-motion animation in the Soviet Union.

In 1933, having gathered around him all the best artists working in the field of animation, Ptushko began work at the Mosfilm Studio on **Novy Gul- Ilver** ("The New Gulliver")—the world's *first* animated feature film—which was to bring him great admiration both in his native country and abroad.

The film's script was a loosely based, politically updated treatment of Jonathan Swift's novel, GUL-LIVER'S TRAVELS. The young schoolboy Petya wins a copy of Swift's novel at the camp he is attending and reads it through that night. He dreams that he is the Gulliver of the story, but the Lilliput in which he lands is an unjust society of capitalist exploitation and social inequality. Thus, Swift's satire on the politics of Old England became a modern day political satire on the contradictions and injustices of 20th century capitalist economies. **Novy Gulliver** was released in 1935 to enormous acclaim. It won a special prize at the International Cinema Festival in Milan, and



The General (left) and Fo-lya (right), two of Ptushko's outstanding Lillipuppet designs.

counted Charlie Chaplin among its admirers. Its inspiration also practically single-handedly gave rise to the great figures of what was to become the Czechoslovak school of stop-motion animation of the 1950's—Jiri Trinka, Herman Tyrlov and Karel Zeman.

Following the success of *Novy Gulliver*, Ptushko was invited by Mosfilm to set up and head a special department for the production of stop-motion animated films. The co-workers who joined him came to be known as "The Ptushko Collective." The collective produced fourteen animated shorts between the years 1936-1938. Some were directed by Ptushko—of special note was Ptushko's color short, *Skazka O Rybake I Rybke* ["The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish," 1937], which marked his first adaptation of a work by the poet Aleksandr Pushkin—while on others he contributed the script and artistic supervision, allowing members of his

collective to try their hand at directing. Many of these shorts were based on the fables of Ivan Krylov (the 19th century Russian equivalent of Jean de La Fontaine), Russian folk tales or the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm.

In 1938, Ptushko and his collective began work on his second and final animated feature film, **Zolotoy Klyuchik** ("The Golden Key"), a Soviet adaptation of the Pinocchio story by Aleksey N. Tolstoy. It tells of the adventures of a talking wooden puppet named Buratino. One day a traveling puppet theatre comes to town. The owner of the theatre, Karabas-Barabas, is a cruel man with a tremendous long black beard who treats his puppets badly. Karabas-Barabas possesses a golden key which is said to open a secret door where a great treasure is to be found. The dog Artemon steals the magic key, but loses it in a pond, where it is found by the wise old turtle Aunt Tartilla. Buratino saves the turtle's son



Papa Carlo (G. Uvarov) carves Buratino in Ptushko's "Pinocchio" tale, ZOLOTOY KLYUCHIK ("The Golden Key," 1938). This clever combination of puppeteering and stop-motion animation anticipated Disney's classic by two years!

and in gratitude Tartilla gives him the key. Buratino and his puppet friends, who have run away from their evil master, are pursued by the angry Karabas-Barabas. But the puppets manage to reach and open the secret door first. There they find a magic book with pictures of a happy land "where all children get to go to school and all old people live very well," as the film's marvelous theme song (by Lev Schwartz) goes. A magic boat that sails through the air comes out of the book and carries them off to this happy land—which, incidentally, greatly resembles the Kremlin towers of Moscow!

In Zolotoy Klyuchik, Ptushko perfected the technique of combining animated and live action footage. He intercuts animated shots of Buratino, shots of marionettes and long shots of an actress playing Buratino in a virtually seamless combination. Ptushko also experimented with the sound, manipulating the voice track of Buratino to produce a high-pitched, creaking voice that perfectly suits the character's wooden body. It seem too that Starevich's work must have influenced the film, as several of the animal characters—a rat, a cat, a fox and various turtles—have the same grotesque appearance as Starevitch's models. The film was very popular in the USSR (and was re-released with a rerecorded soundtrack in 1959) but, unlike Novy Gulliver, it appears not to have been shown in the West (until its recent domestic surfacing on Russianlanguage videocassette). This is a real loss for the film is utterly charming and would most likely be considered one of the milestones in stop-motion animation. But with **Zolotoy Klyuchik**, Ptushko's twelve years of work in animation ended, as he then decided to work exclusively in live action films.

Much like Mario Bava in Italy and William Cameron Menzies in the US, Ptushko was considered a leading expert in special effects and trick photography and he wrote several books on the subject in the thirties and forties. He also sometimes contributed special effects to other directors' films, beginning with Aerograd (1935), the first sound film by the great Ukrainian director, Aleksandr Dovzhenko. One of the most demanding and rewarding films that took advantage of his talents was Deti Kapitana Granta ("The Children of Captain Grant," 1936), an adventure film based on a novel by Jules Verne. This film is full of tremendous miniature shots of volcanoes erupting, ships at sea, matte shots of gigantic cliffs and waterfalls, a giant bird that makes off with a child, and many more astonishing sights.

During the war years, Ptushko was evacuated with most of Moscow's film community to the distant provincial town of Alma-Ata, in the republic of Kazakhstan. During these years he directed no films,



Danila (Vladimir Druzhnikov) sets to work on his masterpiece in Ptushko's masterpiece KAMENNY TSVETOK ("The Stone Flower," 1946), the first Soviet color feature.

but continued to do special effects work. He also began teaching at VGIK, the Moscow film school which had also been relocated to Alma-Ata.

War booty, in the form of three-color Agfa film stock that had been confiscated in Germany, provided several Soviet directors the chance to work in color film after the war.⁵ The first to do so was Ptushko, who set to work back in Moscow on a liveaction film based on a collection of folk tales from the Ural Mountains region by Pavel P. Bazhov, *Kamenny Tsvetok* ("The Stone Flower," 1946).⁶

Prokopych, an old master stone carver who works in malachite, tries to teach his craft to a group of young boys before he dies. One of his pupils, Danila, shows early promise and soon excels his teacher. As a young man, Danila falls in love with a girl from his village, Katya. Katya waits and waits for Danila to marry her, but he becomes lost in his work, obsessed with perfecting a vase in the shape of a flower. His artistic passion is inflamed by a local legend he hears of a magical stone flower said to be possessed by the fabled Mistress of the Copper

Mountain. Despite the praise and admiration of all the local craftsmen, Danila is dissatisfied with his vase because it lacks life. He becomes convinced that the time has come to give up on his dream of perfection and to marry Katya. On his wedding day, Danila hears the seductive voice of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, who has loved him since he was a young boy, calling him to her. Danila leaves the wedding party and goes to the Copper Mountain. The Mistress appears to him and tries to make him forget Katya for her. Danila insists, however, on seeing the Mistress's magical stone flower. She leads him through a fantastic jewel-encrusted cave, into an inner chamber where the gigantic, dazzling stone flower stands, radiant in its power and brilliance. Danila becomes the Mistress's captive as he has no thoughts other than to sculpt a magnificent flower from the cave walls even greater than her own. Katya, meanwhile, who has never given up hope that Danila is alive and will return to her, sees a vision in her looking glass of the evil Mistress attempting to seduce Danila. Katya goes into the haunted woods



The Mistress of the Copper Mountain (Tamara Makarova) awes Danila with the spontaneous blooming of a hillside.

that are the domain of the Mistress who challenges her to try to find Danila and persuade him to leave. Katya enters the Copper Mountain and finds Danila. The constancy of Katya's steadfast love and faith breaks Danila's spell and they plan to leave. The Mistress is so moved by the young couple's resistance to temptation that she gives them her blessing and a beautiful box as a wedding gift. Katya and Danila leave the mountain to return home.

This cautionary tale of the dangers of envy was a radical departure from Ptushko's previous work. The emphasis now was on actors and characterization, rather than special effects, and this trend would become more pronounced in Ptushko's subsequent films; of special note is the performance of one of the Soviet Union's leading actresses, Tamara Makarova, in the role of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain. Even so, *Kamenny Tsvetok* is a dazzling visual spectacle, full of marvelous matte paintings, imaginative art direction and bold use of color. Among the scenes that one remembers is the first appearance of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain

to Danila while still a young boy. She first appears as a colorful lizard wearing a crown who then metamorphoses into human form, her body position and the colorful sparkling dress she wears recalling her reptilian form. There is also the horrific scene in which Katya wanders through the haunted woods, attacked and grabbed at by the sinister, threatening trees and branches which are the slaves of the evil Mistress—a sequence showing the possible influence of two other films from the same period, Walt Disney and David Hand's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (1937) and Victor Fleming's THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939). Also of note is the magical scene of Danila sitting on the porch of his hut at night and watching as a field of flowers suddenly bloom from a barren hillside—an attempt by the Mistress to

CENTER SPREAD: Sadko (Sergei Stolyarov, right) and his men listen to the song of the Phoenix (Lidiya Vertinskaya) in SADKO [1953; US: THE MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD, 1962].





seduce him. Ptushko explained the mechanics of this scene in a talk he gave on trick photography:

In **Kamenny Tsvetok**, I needed a scene of a glade in which beautiful magic flowers rise and open up before Danila's very eyes. Reverse photography was used for this scene.

On a high model platform I had a set of the glade built. Holes 4 to 5 centimeters deep were made all across the model of the glade. 100 to 120 small metal tubes 50 centimeters long and 5 millimeters in diameter were placed in these holes. Each of these tubes had a small funnel on the end 2 to 3 centimeters in diameter. Through these tubes we ran wires which were attached to flowers made from large fluffy feathers dyed the appropriate color. Pulling the wire through the tube, we caused the feathers gradually to contract and disappear into the funnel. Then pulling the whole tube down through the hole in the base of the model, we made them completely disappear from the set.

By placing the actor Druzhnikov, who played Danila, in the glade posed as if getting ready to pick flowers, we got the final phase of the shot we needed, that of the glade covered with flowers that had just come up and Danila reaching out his hand to pick them.

Then, with the aid of special devices, the flowers gradually go into the tubes, after which the tubes themselves disappear beneath the floor of the set. At that, Danila then took several steps back and looked around. But what the viewer saw on the screen, thanks to the use of reverse photography, were strangely shaped buds coming up from the ground before an astounded Danila, which then opened up into beautiful magnificent flowers.⁷

The real showpiece of the film, however, is the interior of the Copper Mountain, a fantastic cave-like lair whose cold glittering blue-green walls are dotted

with hellish lava-red stalagmites. Here Ptushko's use of matte paintings and miniatures creates a fairytale landscape whose unnatural beauty both attracts and repels.

Kamenny Tsvetok was the first feature-length Soviet film in color and brought Ptushko great acclaim. In 1946 it was awarded a special prize for best use of color at the first International Cannes Film Festival. When the film was distributed in the United States in December 1946, the advertising materials made much ado about the film's color, which it called "a revolutionary secret process." (Considering the source of the color stock, one suspects that the process was kept "secret" by Soviet authorities due more to embarrassment than a fear of losing a "company secret!") The version now sold abroad by Sovexportfilm, the Soviet foreign distribution company, is quite beautiful and has retained the film's subtle nuances of color, but it is missing a final epilogue that tied up the film's framing device of the old man seen at the beginning recounting the story to a group of children. 9 In 1947, Kamenny Tsvetok was awarded the Stalin Prize, first class—at the time, the country's most prestigious award.

1946 marked the beginning of an extremely difficult period for Soviet cinema which would worsen until Stalin's death in 1953. In 1946 a neurotic "cleansing" began in the film community just as it had in the other arts. The leading directors of the Soviet Union were condemned: Eisenstein (for IVAN THE TERRIBLE, PART TWO), Pudovkin (ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV), Kozintsev and Trauberg (PLAIN PEOPLE), Dovzhenko (MICHURIN), Gerasimov (YOUNG GUARD), and others. This was followed shortly afterwards in 1949 by a campaign against the so-called "band of cosmopolitans"—a thinlyveiled anti-Semitic purge. Stalin, who is reported to have screened every film made during his reign, demanded that fewer films be made each year in order to allow each one to be a "masterpiece."

The effect of this campaign of repression was a disastrous decline in film production: from 20 features in 1946, to 10 in 1950, and finally to 5 in 1952. This likely accounts, at least in part, for Ptushko's virtual silence during these years. Completed films were shelved and directors replaced with such frequency in these years that it's no surprise that the next film Ptushko co-directed (having replaced Pudovkin, who replaced Sergey Yutkevich)—*Tri Vstrechi* ("Three Encounters," 1950)—was a jumbled mess. The film, a prosaic story of soldiers adapting to demobilization, has no fantasy elements and must surely have been foisted upon Ptushko.

It is particularly valuable then to consider Ptushko's next film, **Sadko** (1952), with regard to



The Indian Maharaja is entertained by dancers, amid breathtaking art direction, in SADKO.

this socio-political climate, for it reflects a change above all in the director's tone. The lighthearted joyfulness of Zolotoy Klyuchik and the sincerity of simple people's pride and satisfaction in folk art of Kamenny Tsvetok are replaced in Sadko by a bombast of pitch and style. It can hardly be an accident that, at this most aggravated stage of the "cult of personality," a film about a great leader who can singlehandedly master even the elements in his quest to help the "poor unhappy masses"—to function, basically, as a god-should be one of only five films approved for production and release in the Soviet Union. And if Stalin's singularly peculiar concept of film production did not result in the modest goal of even five "masterpieces," we can be grateful all the same that it allowed the production of Sadko for, in terms of Ptushko's stylistic visual evolution, the film is a remarkable achievement. 10

The very form of **Sadko** was something new, a new subgenre—the *film-bylina*—within the genre of the *film-skazka*. The *bylina* was a medieval form of epic poetry told in song by peasant bards. These heroic songs, which usually recounted the adventurous and magical exploits of fearless heroes known as "bogatyri," were set down in written form in the 19th

and 20th centuries, and it was in this form that they entered the other arts (poetry, fiction, painting, opera, etc.). Two of the most popular *bogatyri* were Sadko of Novgorod and Ilya of Murom—the very subjects of Ptushko's next two films.

Ptushko's Sadko draws liberally on these bylini in recounting the adventures of the title character, a wandering minstrel from the trading town of Novgorod. Though full of rich merchants, it is the poor and unhappy masses of Novgorod with whom Sadko identifies, and for whom he sets out on a quest for the Bird of Happiness that will bring them contentment and prosperity. His voyage takes him to faraway lands, and eventually to India where he finds and wins a Phoenix in a game of chess. The Phoenix, however, turns out not to be a Bird of Happiness, but a lullaby-tongued harpy that lulls its masses to complacent sleep. Sadko continues further on to Egypt, but the passing landscapes make him homesick for Novgorod and Lubava, the girl he left behind. Before he can return, however, he must still the tempestuous ocean waters by paying tribute to the angry Tsar of the Ocean. Sadko is aided by the Tsar's daughter, Ilmen, who has fallen in love with him for his mournful, sad songs. He tricks the King



Sadko joins Princess Ilmen (Ninel Myshkova) in her father's watery domain.

and manages to escape back to his ship. They return to Novgorod, where Sadko announces that there is no happiness greater than that to be found at home.

If the rather heavy-handed conflict of class struggle between the rich and poor of Novgorod compares poorly with the subtler contradictions of the quest for artistic perfection in Kamenny Tsvetok, then Sadko nonetheless represents a real advancement in certain components of Ptushko's visual arsenal. Although color is given more attention and weightier tasks in Kamenny Tsvetok than in Sadko (where its use is more or less mundane), the creative advances in art direction and set pieces are even more noticeable in the latter. Ptushko employs the full range of special effects—miniatures and models, travelling mattes, matte paintings, reverse photography—to create a fascinating, exotic geography. The two set pieces that stand out are the underwater domain of the Tsar of the Ocean and especially the golden temple of the Indian maharajah, a fantastically opulent throne room dominated by a towering door guarded by a multi-armed Shiva. But the one scene that usually burns itself into the viewer's memory (and I've heard this confession from numerous people in different countries who

don't necessarily know anything about this film or Ptushko) is the inner chamber where the Phoenix is kept. It is a breathtaking piece of design—a golden, low dome-shaped ceiling across which undulating reflections from some unseen pool of water play. 11 The Phoenix is perched atop a tree branch on a raised dais, her face illumined as she opens her wings slightly. The whole scene—the set, the play of lights and colors, the lull of the Phoenix's siren voice, the music of Rimski-Korsakov's "Song of India"—induces in the viewer the same feeling of hypnosis experienced by Sadko and his men. 12

Sadko brought yet another international honor to Ptushko. It won the "Silver Lion" prize at the 14th Venice Film Festival in 1953, and was widely seen in the West. In the United States it was released twice: in 1953 by Artkino in its full-length (89m) Russian version with English subtitles, and again in 1962 by Roger Corman's Filmgroup in a bowdlerized (79m), dubbed version, THE MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD. Ptushko's next film would continue his work in the film-bylina genre and would also be a "first" in other ways.

ONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

NOTES

- I am distinguishing between the film-skazka, which operates in a universe of the fantastic, and the realistic film that uses folktale elements ethnographically, however mystical and ambiguous. Examples of the latter are Andrey Tarkovsky (ANDREY RUBLEV) and Andrey Konchalovsky (SIBERIADE) or films that are even closer to the dividing line: Yuri Ilenko (WHITE BIRD WITH A BLACK SPOT) or especially Sergey Paradzhanov (SHADOWS OF FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS).
- Note the correct transliteration of this title. It is not "Planeta Burg" as it's usually called. The original uncut version of this film, in Russian with English subtitles, is available from Sinister Cinema.
- Whereas in American film the fairy tale has mostly been the domain of animated features, in the Soviet Union it was in the live action film that the greatest fairytale films were made. This is a form of film for which we have few equivalents in the US (THE WIZARD OF OZ being one of the few exceptions).
- Based on a published speech that Ptushko gave in Moscow ("Chudesa" kino ["The 'Wonders' of Cinema 1, Moscow, 1949), we know that he was familiar with Starevich's effects work on the 1913 version of Pushkin's Ruslan and Lyudmila. How much of Starevich he could have seen is not certain, for this was a period when Starevich was still persona non grata and before much preservation work on "the primitives" had begun. Another possible influence is Willis O'Brien, whose KING KONG (1933) we know Ptushko had seen by 1935, when he mentioned briefly in his anthology of articles on the Soviet animated film, Multiplikatsionny film ("The Animated Film," Moscow, 1936). Thus we can only speculate about O'Brien's possible influence on Ptushko's first animated feature.
- This was also how Sergey Eisenstein had suddenly seized the opportunity in 1946 of inserting a color sequence in his mammoth production of IVAN GROZNY ("Ivan the Terrible," 1944-1946).
- Amazingly, Bazhov's collection of stories was translated into English as THEMALACHITE CASKET; TALES FROM THE URALS, Trans. Alan Moray Williams (London/New York: Hutchinson & Co., 1944).

- 7 Ptushko, 'Chudesa' kino, p. 6.
- One wonders whether Mario Bava, who shot very similar sequences in HERCULES, HERCULES UNCHAINED, HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD and THE WONDERS OF ALADDIN might have seen Ptushko's film. He surely would have had the chance to, given its wide release abroad.
- This is based on the transcript of the film held by the Museum of Modern Art's (New York) special Amkino collection. Amkino, a Soviet company that distributed Russian films in the U.S. until it was dissolved in the seventies, donated all its advertising and business documents to the museum. It is a rich source of research materials for scholars of Soviet film distribution.
- Though this certainly should not be construed as an apology for the moral bankrupcy of totalitarianism, the pressure cooker of censorship has resulted more than once in a delicately flavored and quite complex stew. Consider Eisenstein's IVAN GROZNY, especially Part Two, whose story content manages not only a moral critique of the "social command" that gave rise to it, but whose codified stylistic language is so rich as to give the impression of possessing all the secrets of the (artistic) universe.
- Do we even have a name in English for this phenomenon, the reflection cast by the play of light on some surface of water? The Russians do; it's called a "sun bunny" (solnechny zayats), and often figures into their art.
- But what I believe really causes this scene to be remembered is its (probably unintended, but inarguably present) vague arousal of sexual horror. The image of a bird-woman, with its suggestion of a tabooed link beween sexual desire and motherhood and its opposition of the mystery of birth with the brutal trauma of its process—expulsion from the womb—(especially strong in the linkage of human birth with a bird's egg-laying and hatching), is one which is deeply rooted in the subconscious and invariably disturbing. (Compare the ultimate horror that Tod Browning's FREAKS can devise—the vengeful surgery that results in the monstruous human hen.) This is what is at work to make the close up of Ptushko's Phoenix so unsettling and memorable.

Aleksandr L. Ptushko Filmography (1927-1952)

Compiled by Alan Upchurch

Short Films

1927 PROPAVSHAYA GRAMOTA

("Lost Literacy") Silent, B&W, 1 reel (length unknown) Direction: Yu. Merkulov

1928 SLUCHAY NA STADIONE

("An Incident at the Stadium") Silent, B&W, 1 reel (151 meters) Direction and design: A. Ptushko

Puppet maker: A. Ptushko

1928 SHIFROVANNY DOKUMENT

("The Numbered Document") Silent, B&W, 1 reel (185 meters) Script, direction and animation: A. Ptushko

1929 STO PRIKLYUCHENIY

("One-Hundred Adventures") Silent, B&W, 1 reel (471 meters) Script and direction: A. Ptushko

1930 KINO V DEREVNYU!

("Cinema to the Countryside!") Silent, B&W, 1 reel (length unknown) Direction and design: A. Ptushko

1930 KREPI OBORONU

("Strengthen Our Defences") Graphic cartoon, silent, B&W, 1 reel (125 Meters) Script and direction: A. Ptushko

1932 VLASTELIN BYTA ("The Master of Life")

Sound, B&W, 1 reel (430 meters) Script and direction: A. Ptushko

1936 VOLK I ZHURAVL

("The Wolf and the Crane") Sound, B&W, 1 reel (180 meters) Direction: M. Benderskaya Artistic supervision: A. Ptushko

1936 LISA I VINOGRAD

("The Fox and the Grapes") Sound, B&W, 1 reel (180 meters) Direction: V. Levandovsky Artistic supervision: A. Ptushko

1936 **REPKA** ("The Little Turnip")

Sound, B&W, 1 reel (328 meters) Direction: S. Mokil

Script and artistic supervision: A. Ptushko

1936 **RODINA ZOVET** ("The Motherland Calls")

Direction: Aleksandr Macheret Special effects: A. Ptushko

1937 VESELYE MUZYKANTY

("The Gay Musicians") Sound, B&W, 1 reel (415 meters) Script and direction: A. Ptushko

1937 ZAVESHCHANIYE ("The Will")

Sound, color, 2 reels (530 meters) Direction: I. Sklyut

Script: A. Ptushko

1937 LISA I VOLK ("The Fox and the Wolf")

Sound, color, 2 reels (560 meters)

Direction: S. Mokil

Script and artistic supervision: A. Ptushko

SKAZKA O RYBAKE I RYBKE 1937

("The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish") Sound, color, 3 reels (785 meters) Script and direction: A. Ptushko

1938 MALENKY-UDALENKY ("Tiny and Remote")

Sound, B&W, 2 reels (398 meters) Direction: V. Kadochnikov

Script: A. Ptushko

1938 PËS I KOT ("Dog and Cat")

Graphic cartoon, sound, B&W, 2 reels (374 meters)

Direction: L. Atamanyan

Script: A. Ptushko

Feature Films

1935 **AEROGRAD** ("Aerograd")
B&W, 8 reels (2296 meters)
Direction: Aleksandr Dovzhenko
Special effects: A. Ptushko

1935 **NOVY GULLIVER** ("The New Gulliver")
B&W, 6 reels (2200 meters)
Direction, script: A. Ptushko

1936 **DETI KAPITANA GRANTA**("The Children of Captain Grant")

B&W, 9 reels (2390 meters)

Direction: V. Vaynshtok

Special effects: A. Ptushko

*Video: Ark's Intervideo (U.S.)

1939 **ZOLOTOY KLYUCHIK** ("The Golden Key") B&W, 9 reels (2286 meters) Direction: A. Ptushko *Video: Ark's Intervideo (U.S.)

1942 BATYRI STEPEY ("Batyri of the Steppes")
B&W, 4 reels (1025 meters)
Direction: G. Roshal
Special effects: A. Ptushko

1942 PAREN IZ NASHEGO GORODA

("A Lad from Our Town")

B&W, 10 reels (2543 meters)

Direction: A. Stolper and V. Ivanov

Special effects: A. Ptushko

*Video: unknown label (U.S.)

1942 SEKRETAR RAYKOMA

("Secretary of the Committee")

B&W, 11 reels (2460 meters)

Direction: I. Pyriev

Special effects: A. Ptushko

1943 FRONT ("The Front")

Direction: Vasiliev Brothers

Special effects: A. Ptushko

1944 NEBO MOSKVY ("The Skies of Moscow")
B&W, 10 reels (2400 meters)
Direction: Yuri Rayzman
Special effects: A. Ptushko

1944 ZOYA ("Zoya")
B&W, 9 reels (2601 meters)
Direction: L. Arnshtam
Special effects: A. Ptushko

1946 KAMENNY TSVETOK ("The Stone Flower")
Color, 9 reels (2380 meters)
Direction: A. Ptushko
*Video: Ark's Intervideo (U.S.)
Pioneer laserdisc (Japan), ¥4,700

1946 NASHE SERDTSE ("Our Heart")
Direction: Aleksandr Stolper
Special effects: A. Ptushko

1950 TRI VSTRECHI ("Three Encounters")
Color, 9 reels (2276 meters)
Co-direction: A. Ptushko, V. Pudovkin
and S. Yutkevich

1952 SADKO ("Sadko")
Color, 9 reels (2454 meters)
Direction: A. Ptushko
*Video: U.S.: unknown label (integral
Russian version with English subtitles, B&W)
US: "The Magic Voyage of Sinbad" (English
dubbed, cut version) [Sinister Cinema]
France: "Sadko" (uncut version in French)
[Melisa Video; V.I.P. Video]

*Note: These tapes are available in the US in NTSC, Russian language versions (without subtitles, unless otherwise indicated) from video stores in cities with large Russian populations. This appears to be largely a cottage industry, so the quality ranges from poor to fair. Our attempts to contact these Russian video labels directly—like Ark's Intervideo in San Francisco—have been too problematical to recommend. Therefore, we advise interested readers to go to their video stores where these tapes have already been acquired. By mail, they can be purchased (not rented) from the following stores:

Brighton Video Club
Romano Video Club
S20 Brighton Beach Ave. 1067 Brighton Beach Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11235
Brooklyn, NY 11235
(718) 646-3220
Romano Video Club
Romano Video Club
1067 Brighton Beach Ave.
(718) 934-8684

Prices range from \$15.00 to \$25.00 per tape, plus postage. We recommend that interested readers preface their orders with a letter of inquiry, citing the Russian titles, to determine price and availability. This information is provided as a source for our readers, but VIDEO WATCHDOG in no way endorses or guarantees these tapes or services.

TERROR AT THE OPERA

ARGENTO'S ARIA OF VIOLENCE



By Maitland McDonagh

"I think it's unwise to use movies as a guide for reality. Don't you, Inspector?"
—Marco
TERROR AT THE OPERA



PERA IS MORE than the subject of Dario Argento's tenth film, TERROR AT THE OPERA [Opera, 1987]: it's also the key to its stylistic conceits. Beginning with DEEP RED

[Profondo rosso, 1976], Argento's films followed a clear arc of ever-increasing visual extravagance and stylization. Even CREEPERS (Phenomena, 1985), whose icy mise-en-scène lacked the lushness of the films leading up to it, represented a logical step: it's visually cold, but it's extreme in every respect: extremely violent, extremely dumb, extremely weird. But TERROR AT THE OPERA ... well, OPERA is operatic; in Argento's hyperbolic words, an "aria of violence beyond imagination." It's not so much that the violence is so extreme—Argento has never devised horrible acts more horrible than those imagined by dozens of lesser filmmakers. What distinguishes Argento's nasty imagination is his relentless emphasis on looking long and hard. OPERA revolves around an image that says it all: a woman with her eyes open wide because there's a row of straight pins taped under her eyelids. Argento has complained that he's annoyed when people shut their eyes at the gory parts of his films, and OPERA is his taunting answer to the squeamish.

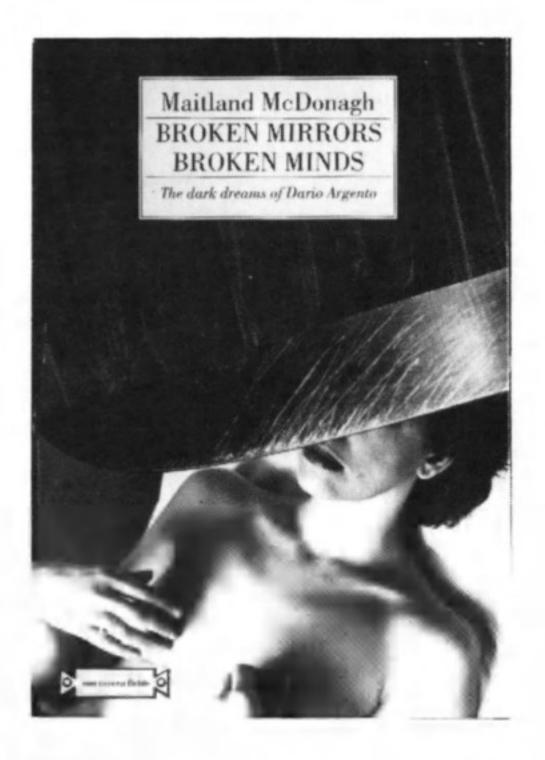
OPERA is the most lavish (and expensive, with a budget of US: \$8 million) production Argento has ever undertaken, exceeding even the glorious excesses of SUSPIRIA and INFERNO (though not quite so aggressively stylized, particularly in terms of color). And it's a spectacle in the purest sense:

Betty (Cristina Marsillach) debuts as Lady Macbeth.



whatever the other thematic resonances of eyes—seen repeatedly in ghastly close-up—they suggest first and foremost that **OPERA** is designed to knock your eyes out; metaphorically speaking, of course. The film's first, surprisingly witty image is of a vast bird's eye, a theatre reflected in an anamorphic curve on its convex surface. Never mind reflections in a golden eye—Argento's reflections in a raven's eye are seductive enough.

No horror film called OPERA can escape the suggestion that it's somehow inspired by the classic PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, and there is some connection here. In addition to recalling the film (the Claude Rains version) from his childhood, Argento has said that there were only two classic horror films he was ever really interested in remaking, and PHAN-TOM OF THE OPERA is one of them (the other, FRANKENSTEIN, got to the script stage during the '70s1). But **OPERA** seems to have been more directly inspired by Argento's abortive attempt to direct a version of Giuseppe Verdi's Rigoletto for the Sferisterio Theatre in Macerata. Even though Franco Zefferelli and Ken Russell have staged operas with some success, the idea of Argento tackling Rigoletto sounds out of left field. On the other hand, the story (adapted from Victor Hugo's 1932 play Le roi s'amuse, considered quite scandalous in its day) is pretty horrific. The debauched Duke of Mantua corrupts an innocent girl whose father then hires a professional killer to exact vengeance; the girl learns of the plan and kills herself to save her seducer. Argento's notion was to take the character of the Duke, who taints and defiles everything he touches, one step further and make him into a literal vampire. Argento's Rigoletto never made it past the concept



HIS ARTICLE is an excerpt from Maitland McDonagh's new book BROKEN MIRRORS/ BROKEN MINDS: THE DARK DREAMS OF DARIO ARGENTO, recently published in the UK by Sun Tavern Fields. This 293-page hardcover survey, the first English-language book devoted entirely to the Italian horror cinema, is an expert and up-to-date analysis of Argento's work, including a filmography, a useful interview ("You ask difficult questions," the Maestro says, squirming in his chair) and an even more valuable bibliography. McDonagh's enlightening book is a virtual jump over the head of a subject that has scarcely been tackled midriff before, in a critical sense, and we strongly recommend it. It may be ordered directly from the publisher: Sun Tavern Fields (Attn: Anthony Blampied), PO Box 982, London E19EQ, England. The price is \$30.00, and US currency is accepted.

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stage (the Italians take their opera seriously; a more conventional version was produced), but his glimpse of the hothouse world of the opera proved inspiring.

OPERA's plot is equal parts A STAR IS BORN, THE FAN and PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, which is to say Argento added a dash of each to a plot of his own feverish devising. Young Betty (Cristina Marsillach), a second generation opera singer, inherits the lead in an avant garde staging of Giuseppe Verdi's Macbeth when diva Mara Cecova ("The great Mara Cecova," as her name seems to be) breaks her leg after a fight with the sadistic director.2 "The great Mara Cecova has been knocked down by a car," the theatre manager announces dramatically, setting the film's overwrought tone. Director Marco (lan Charleson) is noted for his horror movies, and his opera work has been badly received by the press; he's dictatorial, mean, has an axe to grind with the world and wants to seduce Betty. Between Marco, his temperamental collaborators (including a raven handler and his cackling flock), and the fact that Macbeth has a reputation for being bad luck to produce, the atmosphere backstage is highly charged. Though nervous and psychologically troubled, Betty tackles the difficult role with great success.

But her triumph is undermined by the discovery that she has a secret admirer, someone far more threatening than the average eccentric opera buff. Betty's fan is a psychopathic murderer, and he wants her to share his preoccupations. Kidnapped, bound, her eyes taped open (the vicious needles), Betty is forced to watch as he murders first her boyfriend Stefan (William McNamara), then generous wardrobe mistress Julia (Coralina Cataldi Tassoni) and finally her agent and mentor, Mira (Daria Nicolodi). No-one and nothing is safe from his vicious attentions: he creeps into the theatre by night and mutilates Betty's elaborate costume, killing three ravens for good measure. Sinister Inspector Alan Santini (Urbano Barberini)³ frightens Betty almost as much as the killer, and she's haunted by a recurring dream that dates back to her childhood and seems to presage the bloody events unfolding in her real life. "I can't decide whether it's just a dream, or the memory of something that really happened," she confesses to Marco.

Between the murders and the investigation, the entire opera troupe is in an uproar, and Marco hits upon a far-fetched scheme to unmask the killer, whom he's convinced will attend the next presentation of *Macbeth*. Knowing the ravens saw the killer, and aware that they're said (by their handler, at least) to be intelligent and vengeful, he sets the birds loose in the middle of the performance. And he's right: they

seek out the killer-Inspector Santini-and attack him viciously, pecking out one of his eyes (and eating it for good measure). Half blind, Santini kidnaps Betty and escapes to an isolated room in the opera house, which he saturates with gasoline as she sits helpless, bound and blindfolded. As he prepares to set the room on fire, Santini rants. Betty's mother was his lover, he explains, and their relationship was intensely sadomasochistic. Before strangling her, Santini murdered and tortured others at her command, and her death left him bereft. When he saw Betty as Lady Macbeth, it was as though his prayers had been answered; she looked and sounded exactly like her mother, and Santini hoped she would prove as debauched. But having failed to awake her blood lust by forcing her to watch his murders, Santini has decided they must die together. Betty escapes the blaze, and Santini is burned to death. Or so it seems.

Betty and Marco go to the Swiss Alps to rest up and decide what to do next. As she walks on a tranquil hillside, he learns from a newscast that Santini's "death" was a brilliant coup de theâtre involving a mannequin. Santini kills Marco, and Betty escapes one last time before the local police arrive and take him away.

Unlike CREEPERS, whose ludicrous inventions utterly overwhelm the plot, OPERA's flamboyant mise en scène manages to absorb such outré conceits as the vengeful ravens. It's far closer in tone to Tenebrae [US: UNSANE, 1982], taking place in a world of relentless shared guilt and all encompassing anxiety, a world in which artists and their fans combine to form an unholy—and lethal—hybrid. Betty isn't quite Peter Neal; she's not a killer, even though she inspires one. "I'm not like my mother— I'm nothing like her," she tells Santini emphatically, but that doesn't stop the visitation of her mother's sins on her head. And come to think of it, isn't it a little odd that though Betty's relationship with the sweet natured Stefan is troubled, she gravitates towards the twisted Marco as though it were the most natural thing in the world? Even more, the role of Lady Macbeth inflects her character. Never mind, as another character points out, that Verdi's first Lady Macbeth was 17 years old; Betty is really too young to take on the role of a woman driven by an allconsuming lust for power to manipulate her weakwilled husband into the betrayal and murder of his friends and allies. Yet she's brilliant (the reviews all say so), despite her youth and lack of professional experience—no amount of rocking back and forth





Betty is consoled by her ill-fated agent, Mira (Daria Nicolodi).

and muttering "I shouldn't have sung that role, I shouldn't have sung it..." can erase its implications.

In all, OPERA's characters are a sorry lot. Marco's a petty tyrant—his own girlfriend calls him a sadist and adds for good measure that everyone who knows him says so. Santini is a psychopathic killer and Betty's frigid and neurotic, the theatre manager is a venal snob, the great Mara Cecova a temperamental bitch and Betty's closest neighbor is a hard-faced bitch who beats her sweet little daughter, Alma. Niceness, in OPERA's milieu, is a one way ticket to bloody oblivion. Concerned young officer Daniele Soavi4 is summarily dispatched (the first time we even see his face is as he collapses in death) as he tries to guard Betty in her apartment. Gentle Stefan dies in a welter of gore, good-natured Julia is gutted with a pair of scissors and Mira, a substitute mother figure to the orphaned singer, is shot through the eye at point blank range. Even the amiable housekeeper in the Alps—who's on screen all of a minute-pays the ultimate price for her cheery "Guten tag."

Also like **Tenebrae**, **OPERA**'s mode of articulation is discourse, located specifically in the interplay

flashbacks, again introduced to the sounds of water and set off by their own unique score. While the main action takes place to Verdi—with the exception of the murder set pieces, underscored by speed metal—the flashbacks (lit cool blue and styled like some divinely decadent fashion spread) unfold to eerie synthesizer music that is theirs and theirs alone. *Tenebrae*'s world, a few years into the future or whatever, is a world of pervasive, quotidian violence, and OPERA is much the same, con brio.

Argento's relentless search for the outer limits of style has produced images as diverse and arresting as **DEEP RED**'s floating pans and the saturated palettes of **SUSPIRIA** (1977) and **INFERNO** (1980). **OPERA**'s signature flourish is a series of shots of the killer's pulsating brain, as literal and audacious a picture of madness as the cinema can generate. In and of itself that's not absolutely unique, of course. In Nicolas Roeg and Donald Cammell's **PERFORM-ANCE** (1970), the camera follows a bullet through a man's skull, into his brain and out the other side into a new world shaped, we infer, by his obsessive and introspective madness. And in the much underrated



Betty receives a disturbing call from a mysterious admirer.

BRAIN DAMAGE (1988)—a warped fantasy in which an ordinary young man develops a symbiotic relationship with a mutant slug whose saliva produced hallucinations—director Frank Henenlotter's camera exposes not only the protagonist's brain, but a light show of sparks as he experiences altered states through chemistry. But Argento, ever dependable, goes that extra step: not only does the killer's brain throb, but the entire screen throbs along with it. Odd, perhaps, that 20th Century Fox's pre-credits sequence for SUSPIRIA should have adumbrated one of Argento's most grotesquely apt images.

OPERA is relentlessly self-referential, what with the production of *Macbeth* on stage, televised live and reproduced on an apparently endless series of video monitors. The larger-than-life quality of the performers' offstage escapades is a thematic equivalent: lust, murder and secret sins of the past make their 'real' lives as melodramatic as the opera itself. Such an oppressive motif demands notice, and suggests a film whose gaze is directed inward. OPERA also abounds in images linking it to earlier films, almost as though it were intended as a summation to date of characteristic visuals and themes.

The emphasis on eyes, in addition to signalling the spectacular nature of the opera-within-a-film experience, recalls not just Tenebrae, but DEEP RED and THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo, 1970] as well. Argento also returns to his familiar image of drapery parting to admit the protagonist to a private (and dangerous) world; in DEEP RED and INFERNO a heavy curtain leads to, respectively, a conference where telepaths reach out and touch the minds of secret psychopaths, and the lair of an evil alchemist. In FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET [Quattro mosche di velluto grigio, 1972], three sets of red drapes separate Roberto Tobias from his fateful encounter in a not-quite-empty-enough theatre; OP-ERA's Betty passes through virtually identical drapes to keep her date with destiny at the opera house. Additionally, FOUR FLIES comes to mind when the anonymous killer makes his way to an isolated box in the opera house, the better to watch Betty sing. Opera glasses in hand, he recalls the anonymous puppet figure watching Roberto play a particularly tricky scene in the tragedy of his life.

With OPERA, music pulls ahead as the clear



Argento directs his Lord and Lady Macbeth for their climactic performance of "The Scottish Play."

favorite among professions pursued by Argento protagonists: Betty joins FOUR FLIES' Roberto (a drummer in a rock band), pianist Marc Daly in DEEP RED and music student Mark Elliot of INFERNO. Even allowing for the exoticism that makes the music world (worlds, rather) a natural for the screen (colorful personalities, nifty trade secrets, behind the scenes glamour and lots of sequins) this clearly means something. Argento's identification with writers, tellers of dark stories, is obvious; it's no surprise that three of his movies revolve around them: Sam Dalmas (THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUM-AGE), Carlo Giordani (THE CAT O'NINE TAILS) and most spectacularly, Peter Neal (Tenebrae).5 But Argento clearly values the directness of affect that characterizes music...all music, from Verdi's Va Pensiero to Dokken's thrash metal noise making and Goblin's hypnotic synthesizer scores.

In light of Argento's Theatro Sferistero experience, you can't help but take notice when reference is made in passing to Marco's last opera production: Rigoletto. And it got devastating reviews ("Advice to the director: go back to horror films. Forget opera."); Marco's girlfriend remarks that he was really pissed off. The Great Mara Cecova has a few choice words for his Macbeth as well. "It's ridiculous! This is Macbeth by Giuseppe Verdi...this isn't one of your crummy movies. Birds on stage, back projection, laser beams! What is this? An opera or an amusement park!"

Sure, it's cheap, armchair psychoanalysis, but Marco is clearly a more literal stand-in for Argento than any other character he's ever committed to film, and the backstage world of Opera's Macbeth—hysterical cast and crew and all—reflections of the real thing. Argento's sets are notorious; his reputation as a harsh and moody task master whose sets seethe with intrigue, discontent and psychodrama precedes him. The Argento/Marco equation is more than after-the-fact theorizing; Alan Jones reported the following exchange from OPERA's set:

"He hasn't realized this yet but I'm basing Marco on my observations while watching Dario at work and his characteristic movements," said [actor lan] Charleson. "He'd better not be," cried Argento. "This film is not a celebration of the director... I wish I hadn't learnt that as it now gives the film a resonance beyond what I'm trying to achieve."

A celebration it's not. Marco is a petty dictator who jokes that he jerks off before shooting a scene and delights in degrading his colleagues. But he's the fulcrurn of the film's reflexive structure. When Betty gets the big role because of the Great Mara Cecova's accident, it's Mark who brings the obvious out into the open: "It usually only happens to people in the movies, eh?" he says to her. And it's Mark who reminds Inspector Santini that there's reality and then there's fiction. "I've seen a lot of your movies, and you're really an expert in this field," Santini needles after Stefan's death. "I'd be very interested to hear your opinion." "I think it's unwise to use movies as a guide for reality. Don't you, Inspector?" Marco replies in his iciest voice. The Inspector's reply, something to do with it depending on your definition of reality, ought to be a tip off. It is, after all, a far cry from the no-nonsense, "Just the facts, Ma'am," attitude we associate with ratiocination, which reflects badly on a policeman. And though Peter Neal is crazy enough to think real life murder is just like writing a book (and further, crazy enough to act on that belief), Marco knows it's not like making a movie.

On some level OPERA is a response to the critics and detractors who seem to suggest that Argento's aesthetics aren't restricted to the screen; he has been denounced with such virulence one can only assume they believe he encourages murder and brutality in real life. OPERA is all about the distance between reality and spectacle, and Argento hammers home the message with almost neurotic thoroughness. In costume Betty is a grandiose vision in pearls and feathers and velvet; her voice is aweinspiring and her demeanor haughty and dismissive. Offstage she's meek and almost plain, everybody's victim; even the little child next door-Alma, who helps her escape the killer through the ventilation shafts—turns out to be more capable than she is. In the theatre, while Macbeth is being rehearsed and performed, Marco is a dictator with the power to make the entire cast and crew bend to his will; in Switzerland with Betty—far from the opera house he's reduced to torturing flies. The Great Mara Cecova, whose powerful voice rings out from the stage during OPERA's opening credits—has no existence at all offstage; once she's out of the action, she's glimpsed only through synecdoche—a leg in a cast and a bottle of suspicious perfume delivered to Betty. Far from encouraging the viewer to translate fantasy into reality, it suggests that this way lies foolishness at the very least, and perhaps madness and destruction as well. In fact, OPERA's closing

scene—widely dismissed as cloying and out of sync with the rest of the film—we last see Betty on her hands and knees, declaring her solidarity with all nature. Though the soundtrack is angelic and the imagery bucolic, it's all a little too good to be true; the inevitable conclusion is that Betty has let go her tenuous grip on reality and surrendered to madness. Coming on the heels of CREEPERS, OPERA offered refreshing evidence that Argento was still capable of accomplished and provocative filmmaking.

NOTES

- Luigi Cozzi, who co-wrote the screenplay with Argento, says: "He wanted to take a very classical approach, but to set the story in pre-Nazi Germany, during the Weimar Republic. The Frankenstein monster would have been a kind of symbol of the birth of Nazism. We had trouble with the Americans [specifically Universal Pictures] there—they said Frankenstein was dead, and anyway, no-one who wanted to see a horror movie cared about politics." Packaged with Timothy Dalton (now James Bond) in the lead, the project was also offered to Hammer with no luck.
- Some last minute improvisation turned the diva's role into an unseen vocal cameo. Mara Cecova was to have been played by English actress Vanessa Redgrave (coincidentally, David Hemmings' BLOW-UP co-star), who reportedly arrived demanding that her salary be raised. Argento decided instead to cut the role to its bare bones, and realized no-one really had to see Cecova at all.
- Barberini, coincidentally, had just finished shooting a small role in Franco Zefferelli's OTHELLO before starting OPERA.
- The name is an affectionate nod to Michele Soavi, who was—as he has been on several other Argento films—OPERA's second unit director.
- Everything else ties for third and last. Suzy Banyon is studying ballet (SUSPIRIA), Jennifer Corvino (CREEPERS) is still in high school, and Roderick (Isher ("The Black Cat" in TWO EVIL EYES) is a photographer.

THE CUT/TING ROOM FLOOR



obsession.

murder.

madness.

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Dario Argento terror at he opera

O film written, produced and directed by DARIO ARGENTO
URBANO BARBERINI WILLIAM McNAMARA AUTOMELIA VITALE BARBARA CUPISTI
SCHEROPOLY by DARIO ARGENTO and RANCO FERRINI & CECCHI GORI

TERROR AT THE OPERA with CRISTINA MARSILLACH IAN CHARLESON CORALINA CATALON TASSONI and Starring DARIA NICOLODI photography RONNIE TAYLOR (B.S.C.) GROUP TIGER CINEMATOGRAFICA ADX production directed by DARIO ARGENTO Copyright (2) 1989 Couch Good Group Tiger.

By Tim Lucas

TERROR AT THE OPERA

USA: Southgate Video (VHS/HF-S), \$89.98

Japan: RCA/Columbia SFO47-5368 (LD/D-S), ¥4,841

N THE YEARS SINCE I wrote "The Butchering of Argento" (FANGORIA #66, August 1987)—the first article describing the extensive editorial assaults suffered by Dario Argento's films in America not a great deal has changed. The work of Italy's modern maestro of the macabre has not had an American theatrical release since New Line Cinema removed nearly 30m from Phenomena (1986) and called it CREEPERS. With the exception of his production **DEMONS**, Argento's subsequent work has either been ignored completely, or subjected to interference—as in the case of the monumentally sticky but unviolent DEMONS 2: THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUES, which was sponged dry to win an R rating. His most recent films, OPERA and TWO EVIL EYES, were "picked up for distribution" but the results made the phrase seem euphemistic of impoundment.

At first glance, Southgate Video's long-awaited release of Argento's retitled TERROR AT THE OP-ERA [Opera, 1987] poses some intriguing questions. For example, has the release of this particular title been too long-awaited? Hasn't nearly every American videàste with an interest in seeing the picture already acquired it on Japanese disc or bootleg cassette? Fortunately, such questions are meaningless given the argument of the Southgate tape itself which, in its unrated version, is by far the most complete version of the film available anywhere and an unqualified must for any Argentophile.

Until now, the search for a complete **OPERA** has been a rather quixotic task. The first cassette to filter through the video tapevine was the second Italian version, a hastily-edited, PG-13 abortion which re-

placed the ultraviolent original after its first days of exhibition in Rome. For most collectors, this fuzzy dupe—sold by a handful of Italian-language ethnic video stores—was the only available version until the film was issued on tape and laserdisc in Japan as TERROR AT THE OPERA. The film's obstacle course to freedom was more than evident from the tape/disc's opening moments, which heralded an RCA/Columbia presentation of a Cecchi-Gori Group-Tiger Cinematografica-A.D.C. produzione in collaborazione with RAI Radio Televizione Italiana of an Orion release.

The Japanese TERROR AT THE OPERA has been criticized by those who own it for not being letterboxed (the main title sequence is matted, the rest cropped to 1.33:1) and for deleting the film's original *finale*, in which the heroine Betty (Cristina Marsillach) rhapsodizes about her love of nature and frees a small lizard from some tangled blades of grass. Despite their shared retitling, Southgate Video's uncut version of the film is nearly 5m longer than its Japanese predecessor! In addition to the long-lost lizard coda, Southgate's tape restores two brief but important scenes not present in the Oriental release.

 The first of these scenes follows Betty's breakdown in her apartment, over the gruesome murder of boyfriend Stefano (William McNamara), following the words whispered from the air vent by the watchful neighbor child Alma: "Don't cry, Betty—please don't cry!"

In the Japanese version, this scene cuts directly to Inspector Alan Santini (Urbano Barberini)'s examination of a feather found at the murder site.



Argento's Musical Scale: Every Good Boy Deserves... to have his eye plucked out by angry ravens!!

In the Southgate version, the two scenes are separated by a 55s scene in Marco (lan Charleson)'s hotel room, where he is being read opening night reviews by Marion (Antonella Vitale). This scene is crucial for several reasons. First of all, the content of the reviews ("Forget opera and go back to horror pictures!") emphasizes Marco as an Argento alter ego. Furthermore, Marion's dialogue suggests that Marco's concern for Betty is based in his secret wish to seduce her, planting the suspicion that he may be the maniac, a suspicion she underlines in a later scene with Marco by claiming that everyone she knows considers him "a sadist." The scene also implies that Marion herself, thinking of herself as Betty's romantic rival, could be the maniac (womyniac?), as she reminds Marco that she took two flights and missed a fashion show just to be with him. The scene's deletion from the Japanese disc is inexplicable.

 The second scene missing from the Japanese release—again, restored to the Southgate version lasts 1m 2s and follows Betty and Alma's escape from the maniac through the air vents of their apartment building.

After eluding their hooded pursuer, they encounter a second obstacle: the child's mother, a smoking slattern (Carola Stagnaro) who is outraged by Betty's unexpected presence in her apartment. Alma defends her friend, and Betty begs the woman—who

she recognizes from an earlier sighting through the spyhole of her apartment door—for the use of her phone, but she is told to get out. As the door is slammed behind her, Betty hears the mother curse her child: "You're filthy, disgusting!" Alma talks back: "You're disgusting—you're always naked!" There is the sound of a slap as the child is ordered to her room.

It seems likely that this scene, more flavorful than necessary, was deliberately cut from the Japanese edition because of its dishonorable portrayal of a parental figure. The scene will be especially interesting to those Argentophiles who recall Stagnaro in her more respectable role as "Inspector Altieri" in UN-SANE [Tenebrae, 1982], because her performance was dubbed by the same British voice artist for both features!

Southgate Video's TERROR AT THE OPERA is, then, a very pleasant surprise that joins SUSPIRIA and INFERNO among the precious few Argento titles that can be seen and purchased domestically in their

Argento—with director Lamberto Bava and cinematographer Lorenzo Battaglia—attends the filming of daughter Fiore's air duct escape in DEMONS (1986).



original, uncut condition. (Southgate is also releasing an R-rated edition of TERROR AT THE OPERA but, since this variant exists only to stimulate additional sales—ie., Blockbuster Video—it falls outside the scope of this article and our interest.) Let us hope that Southgate uses the leverage of this important release to break into the laserdisc market, a medium which their previous releases have yet to enjoy.

DEMONS

USA: New World Video (Beta/VHS), OP Starmaker Video (VHS-SP), \$19.95, (VHS-EP), \$9.95 Japan: RCA/Columbia SFO78-1129 (LD/HF-S), ¥7,591

HE JAPANESE LASERDISC of the Argento-produced DEMONS [Demoni, 1985], directed with great flair by Lamberto Bava, sheds some unexpected light on some confusing credits pinned to the tail-end of its American version. The American release of **DEMONS** (recently reissued in SP rental and EP sell-through versions by Starmaker Video, and still available on laserdisc from Image Entertainment) concludes with two title cards, the first of which announces that American post-production was provided by Lajon Productions, Inc., under the supervision of Lawrence Appelbaum. The second card credits Burton Lee Harry, Dennis Patterson, Gabrielle Gilbert, and Joe Earle with "Creative Sound Design."

Sound is indeed the obvious difference between the Japanese and American versions of **DEMONS**. When the film was acquired for US distribution in 1986 by the Ascot Entertainment Group, the original Dolby Stereo soundtrack—referred to in the film's dialogue—was dropped. The original soundtrack preserved on RCA/Columbia's Japanese laserdisc—dubbed into English in Rome by Nick Alexander—reveals that the aural changes were far more complicated than a simple monophonic mix.

Unlike the US version, in which the film's Heavy Metal soundtrack was heard in flat mono sound and mixed down to the approximate volume of the dialogue, the stereo music on the Japanese version—once the volume is set to make the dialogue only minimally audible—is nothing less than house-shaking. Many of the film's sound effects are recorded at a volume as piercing as the music—curtains pulled open tear across the eardrum like the slash of a knife—giving the film one of the most

manipulative and intimidating soundtracks since THE EXORCIST.

The bulk of Lajon Production's post-production work seems to have involved the re-recording of certain dialogue scenes. For the most part, the changes are so slight that it's hard to see why they bothered. The earliest instance of altered dialogue occurs during the first scene inside the Metropol Theatre, 2 as a married couple stand in line to see the film that "infects" its audience with demonism. Here is the dialogue heard in the Japanese version, with US changes bracketed where they occur:

WOMAN: That's strange; I didn't know there was a movie house on this street.

MAN: It's been closed for years. They must

have put a small fortune into the renovation. [US: It shut down a couple years ago. Looks like they spent some

money on it.]

WOMAN: How come I never noticed it?

MAN: You never notice anything. [US: You

never notice anything, darling.]

WOMAN: Don't start, please, Frank? I mean, it's

our anniversary! [US: Please, Frank. Don't start. This is our anniversary!]

MAN: So what? I'm taking you to a show.

What else do you want?

The changes made in this exchange seem to accomplish nothing more than to make the characters seem a bit less erudite and a bit more sarcastic. More noticeable changes in dialogue occur later in the film, during the cutaways to the coke-crazed joyride of a Berlin punk gang—Ripper, Nina, Ricky, and Hot Dog—in a stolen station wagon. Here the reasons for the redubbing are easier to discern. The voice given to Ripper in the original dubbing seems a deliberate imitation of Sylvester Stallone, and Nina's voice seems equally parodic of Cyndi Lauper. An attempt seems to have been made to make these characters speak more casually and realistically.

The US version features no dialogue changes in the first and second scenes with these characters, but the voices are noticeably re-recorded. The dialogue itself changes in the third cutaway, as the gang argue over a cocaine tray disguised as a Coca-Cola can with straw:



A demon emerges from the spine of his human piñata.

NINA: [TO RIPPER] Hey, slow down! Leave

some of that for us!

RICKY: My turn!

NINA: Why don't you learn some manners, ya

little shit!

[US: Why? My can, shit head!]

HOT DOG: Hey, get the hell outta here!

[US: Gimme the can, jerk!]

RICKY: I said it was my turn!

HOT DOG: Well, I say this stuff is too good for you,

asshole! [US: It's too fucking good for

assholes like you!]

The group scuffle over the coke can and spill it all over the backseat. The car comes to a halt and Ripper turns angrily

in his seat.

RIPPER: What the fuck! What's a matter with you

guys?

NINA: It's not my fault, Ripper!

RIPPER: Fuck you! Pick it up! Every last gram!

[US: Fuck you! Pick it up! Every gram!]

The fourth cutaway to Ripper's car, as cocaine is swept up from the backseat's floor and upholstery with brushes, spoons, and razor blades, is extensively reworded:

NINA: Ohhhh, it's even in my panties...

HOT DOG: Givin' you a buzz, huh?

[In the US version, this line is eliminated

without replacement.]

RIPPER: All of it! I said, all of it!

RICKY: Why don't you relax, Ripper? You had

more than your share already.

[US: You got trouble gettin' your dope

back now, Ripper!]

RIPPER: Shut up! Unless you want me to break

your head?

RICKY: Oooooh, that's Rambo talkin', baby! Oh

yeah, go on! Beef Island!

[US: Oooooh, that's Rambo talkin', baby! Oh yeah, tough Ripper!]

HOT DOG: Don't make me laugh, Baby Pig. This

takes concentration.

In the next cutaway, as Ricky cuts Nina's breast while raking coke off her cleavage with a razor blade, her reprimand changes from "Wait'll I get near your prick, Ricky!" to "You're a prick, Ricky!" in the US version.

At the close of the next cutaway (at the end of Side One of the Japanese disc), the gang hears desperate calls for help coming from the Metropol, and Ripper suggests that it's only the sound of the movie.

HOT DOG: No it's not!

RIPPER: What is it, then?

HOT DOG: It's the coke in your ears!

In the most baffling of the transpacific translations, the sound is explained entirely differently in the Ascot version:

HOT DOG: It's Count Drac-u-lahhhhhh!

Shortly after Ripper's gang succeeds in breaking into the Metropol, Nina is attacked by a demon. Hearing her cries, her comrades call her name for clues to her whereabouts. The US version renames her "Rita."

While the value of these dialogue changes is debatable, Ascot Entertainment engineered another alteration that, as far as this viewer is concerned. stands as one of the film's most visionary touches. Certain ominous points throughout the picture—the first shots of the Metropol, or as blind Werner perceives evil when touching the Demon's mask in the Metropol lobby—were accented with deep bass synthesizer "stings." This effect can be heard immediately in the US version under the film's opening titles—"Dario Argento Presents... A Lamberto Bava Film... DEMONS" (with an additional "slash" sound effect to compliment the claw marks bisecting the film's title)—and, once heard, seems a basic and indivisible component of the film's appeal and atmosphere. The film simply isn't as powerful without it.

With the American "Ascot Entertainment Group" title cards shaved away, there is no time difference between the two versions of the film and, with the exception of a small shot of Nina snorting coke (forfeited by the Japanese disc by its positioning at the close of Side One), there is no additional or replacement footage. The Japanese version is matted at 1.85:1 and has Japanese subtitles superimposed on the lower image. The image throughout is moderately darker than the New World/Image issue, making the name of the Metropol difficult to read



One of DEMONS' early casualties models the makeup of Sergio Stivaletti.

during exterior establishing shots, but it is also far more successful than the domestic release at capturing the eerie neon quality of the blue lighting that accompanies the ill-fated air duct escape of Fiore Argento (Dario's daughter) and her boyfriend.

Argento's films may be devilishly difficult to see while they are still new, but we should be thankful for their tendency to appear, sooner or later, on tape or disc somewhere. To paraphrase **DEMONS**' infamous catch-phrase, they will make home entertainment systems their cathedrals and your video shelves will be their tombs.

- A close listening further reveals that the voice artist in charge of Cristina Marsillach's performance previously dubbed Lara Wendel's role as "Maria" in **Tenebrae**. Daria Nicolodi, who was dubbed by a pregnant Theresa Russell (!) in **Tenebrae**, supplies her own pleasantly husky voice in **Opera**.
- The striking Metropol Theatre is also featured in Harald Reinl's THE INVISIBLE HORROR [Die Unsichtbaren Krallen des Dr. Mabuse, "The Invisible Clutches of Dr. Mabuse," 1961]. Availble from Sinister Cinema, P.O. Box 4369, Medford, OR 97501-0168.

BIBLIO WATCHDOG

ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE: THE FILMS OF JOHN CARPENTER

Robert C. Cumbow Scarecrow Press, 251 pgs., \$29.50

THE FILMS OF FREDDIE FRANCIS

Wheeler Winston Dixon Scarecrow Press, 318 pgs., \$37.50

Order from Scarecrow Press, P.O. Box 4167, Metuchen NJ 08840

Reviewed by Tim Lucas



HE SUBJECTS of two new books in The Scarecrow Press' "Filmmakers Series"—John Carpenter and Freddie Francis—have a few things in common.

Both directors are regarded as fantasy specialists, both share similar reputations for being very down-to-earth in their attitudes, and both are linked in the minds of their fans to a curiously analogous image of a white-masked figure, wielding a deadly blade. Though this image, shared by PARANOIAC (1962) and HALLOWEEN (1978), indicates a common sensibility at work, the portraits rendered in the first book-length studies about them place Francis and Carpenter in diametric opposition.

Freddie Francis not only regards his work in the genre with distaste, but openly regards its practitioners and fans with condescension, and the genre itself with contempt. He sneers at "typical terror stuff," then admits to never having seen any. He declares Christopher Lee's performance in THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1957) "a pathetic attempt," then admits to never having seen the film, only a still of Lee in makeup—and this is prefatory to a discussion of Kiwi Kingston ("a lovely, lovely man") in the truly pathetic EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN (1964)! He speaks disdainfully of the fans who once flocked to him at a horror convention, for preferring to discuss Terence Fisher than the likes of Billy Wilder and William Wyler. (It's no wonder Freddie wanted to change the subject; he has never seen

Fisher's films and didn't befriend him till they both found themselves out of work.) Though he doesn't see the honor of it, Francis—who works today as he began, as a cinematographer—remains one of the outstanding stylists of the British horror film. His best work (the cinematography of Jack Clayton's THE INNOCENTS, 1961, the direction of THE SKULL, 1965) is very special indeed, and even his worst films share a visual imagination that, while less than classic, is always much more than competent. "On every film I did," he says, "the film transcended the script visually." True enough.

John Carpenter, on the other hand, is down-toearth with his head in the stars. Affected by the dynamic storytelling of Jack Arnold at an early age, Carpenter views fantasy as prime territory for escapism, mystery, and metaphor. Unlike Francis, Carpenter has not only bothered to see the classics of the genre in which he works, he has embraced them, infused them into his filmic vocabulary-not to imitate them, or to dilute his own originality, but to use his antecedents as points of reference, as a means of implying the thematic directions in which he intends to take us. When his editorial credit as "John T. Chance" on ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 (1976) points us to his indebtedness to Howard Hawks' RIO BRAVO, or when HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH (1982, which Carpenter produced) unfolds in mythic Santa Mira, California (the site of Don Siegel's INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS), Carpenter provides a post-modern, cinematic shorthand to inform attentive viewing. He understands that it's impossible to know how far the fantasy cinema can go without knowing how far it's gone. It's very telling that John Carpenter found the time to write an Introduction to Wheeler Winston Dixon's forthcoming book about Terence Fisher. He's a payback kind of guy.

Wheeler Dixon's current book, THE FILMS OF FREDDIE FRANCIS, would rate well as a career article for a genre magazine, but it doesn't quite have the critical thoroughness or organization of materials one expects from a book assuming such a definitive title. Haphazardly assembled, the book begins with a Foreword by series editor Anthony Slide, who declares THE FILMS OF FREDDIE FRANCIS "probably the last book to document a man who has been both [cinematographer and director]." (What about Karl



First there was Sheila Burrell as the masked killer of Freddie Francis' PARANOIAC (1962)...

Freund? Mario Bava? Russ Meyer? Nicolas Roeg? Caleb Deschanel?) After a mellow Introduction by Francis himself, Dixon steps in with a memoir of his visit to the set of FF's last directed feature, THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS (1985). This is followed by two interviews; the first is a get-acquainted talk conducted in January 1985, prior to Dixon's arrival onset, and the other-spanning Francis' entire career-was conducted in the director's home in Spring 1988. The career interview (which, at 125 pages, composes nearly half the book) is a remarkable document of information, anecdote, bile, and candor; it reads like popcorn eats. (The "PF" replying to certain questions here is, presumably, Freddie's wife Pamela; she isn't cited.) The interviews are followed by a filmography, appended with synopses (reprinted from pressbooks and THE MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN) and Dixon's own, mostly slender, critical assessments. The book ends with the transcript of a brief telephone interview with Peter Cushing, on the subject of Freddie Francis. (Surprise: Peter likes him.)

At the outset of their first conversation, Dixon breaks the ice with Francis by declaring himself "an admirer of yours, but not as a Hammer director." Well, the reader may ask, apart from his career as an

Oscar-winning cinematographer—which Dixon explores with only a modicum of mention—what else is there? His Amicus films? His Tyburn films? TROG, CRAZE, THE VAMPIRE HAPPENING, SON OF DRACULA? In fact, throughout the "Critical Commentary" that follows the interviews, Dixon reserves his most thorough appreciations for Francis' Hammer films—particularly the Neurosis Trilogy of PARANOIAC, NIGHTMARE (1963), and HYSTERIA (1964, the films in which "Francis came into his own as a director"). Even the Amicus-produced THE SKULL, by general consensus Francis' best directorial outing, is given barely a page of comment, compared to the almost-ten allotted to HYSTERIA, easily the least of his Hammer work.

However much he tries to disguise it, Dixon brings to his research the best and worst aspects of fannish devotion. He is clearly enamored of British horror and points out with obvious affection the underrated contributors to these films, most intriguingly the iconic role played in several Francis films by the character actress Clytie Jessop. When the time comes to criticize, however, Dixon has a tendency to place Francis above his surplus of uninspired work, responsible only for its finer qualities, and to praise him for the contributions of his screenwriters, cine-



... then there was George P. Wilbur as John Carpenter's masked killer in HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MEYERS (1988).

matographers, and also for the contributions of his actors (directed by Francis only to "get on with it"). To use a phrase like "Francis' camera" when describing the work of craftsmen like John Wilcox or Arthur Grant is ill-advised, especially for a book in which Francis himself belittles his involvement with his directors of photography: "[I] just drop hints." In the case of his extended defense of NIGHTMARE. Dixon's critical remarks flounder repeatedly into restatements of the already-overlong synopsis preceding it; the reader may also feel some resentment, after pages and pages of straight-faced analysis, at being told in summation that Francis has "a fine sense of the ridiculousness of [the piece]." To commend Francis for being unable to conceal his distaste seems not only counterproductive, but a willful attempt to lend a dimension more sympathetic and defensible than mere prejudice to his condescending attitudes. Dixon's remarks—which stop after THE CREEPING FLESH (1972), to save us all the embarrassment of the Tyburn years—opine rather than inform; he doesn't cite, for example, the true sources of the stories Milton Subotsky cannibalized for the Amicus anthologies (e.g., the debt of Roy Castle's segment of DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS to Cornell Woolrich's story "Papa Benjamin"), nor

does he offer an opinion of how TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972) compares with other EC Comics adaptations.

Fortunately, nothing the irascible Freddie says can spoil the entertainment value of his best films, and this book is likely to send its readers back for another look. (They'll have trouble finding the 1974 fiasco SON OF DRACULA, which the author mistakenly claims is domestically available on video.) THE FILMS OF FREDDIE FRANCIS also benefits from an assortment of stills from FF's personal collection, one of which—a production shot from THE SKULL—proves that the Skull POV shots were not created with a matte or painted lens, but by a giant skull mask that rode the front of the camera itself. This picture, of Peter Cushing cowering under its looming, hollow stare, is alone worth a thousand words... not one of which appears outside the caption.

While Francis, never at a loss for a word, is entrusted to an unobtrusive interpreter, John Carpenter—the most laconic personality I've ever interviewed—is the subject of Robert C. Cumbow's ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE, one of the most cogent, best-argued books I've read about a fantasy specialist. While THE FILMS OF FREDDIE FRANCIS ends with the reformed cinematographer awaiting his next

assignment (HER ALIBI, a 1989 dud, missing his more significant work on Edward Zwick's GLORY by a year), Cumbow's book appears at a fascinating point in Carpenter's arc, since no new film has appeared since the day he dropped its manuscript in the mail. The fact that it follows PRINCE OF DARKNESS (1987) and THEY LIVE (1989)—two films signalling an adventurous return to low-budget, independent, creatively controlled filmmaking—makes Carpenter's next film all the more anticipated, and makes the appearance of this first booklength study seem particularly well-timed.

The book's title is taken from PRINCE OF DARK-NESS: "While order does exist in the universe, it is not at all what we had in mind." Cumbow offers an overview of Carpenter's career from THE RESUR-**RECTION OF BRONCO BILLY** (1970, a USC short directed by James Rokos, which JC scripted) to THEY LIVE, devoting modest chapters of highly concentrated criticism to each feature, focusing on their common belief in Evil as an elemental force that must be contained, and equal belief in individual justice as the only reasonable response to disordered, amoral times. Interstitial glimpses are accorded to such non-directorial involvements as EYES OF LAURA MARS (1978), BAD MOON RISING (1985), and the HALLOWEEN sequels. Not content simply to disregard the sequels on the basis of irrelevance, Cumbow dissects their irrelevance to illustrate an organic betrayal of Carpenter's original premise.

Cumbow has a commendably sharp eye for detail: he notes that ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 (1976) actually occurs in "Precinct 9—Division 13," and that FORBIDDEN PLANET is televised during the course of HALLOWEEN (1978) in its correct aspect ratio. He also offers background on Carpenter's telling use of pseudonyms and character names and, whenever a scene in Carpenter echoes a scene from an influential movie, his finger-pointing is always dead on the money. Cumbow also provides thumbnail descriptions of the material added to the tele-versions of HALLOWEEN and THE THING (1982), understanding that this book will be used by many as a guide to Carpenter's work on video. (His claim that THE THING is available on video in both versions, however, is inaccurate; it was HALLOW-**EEN** that was once accidentally released on video in its televised form.)

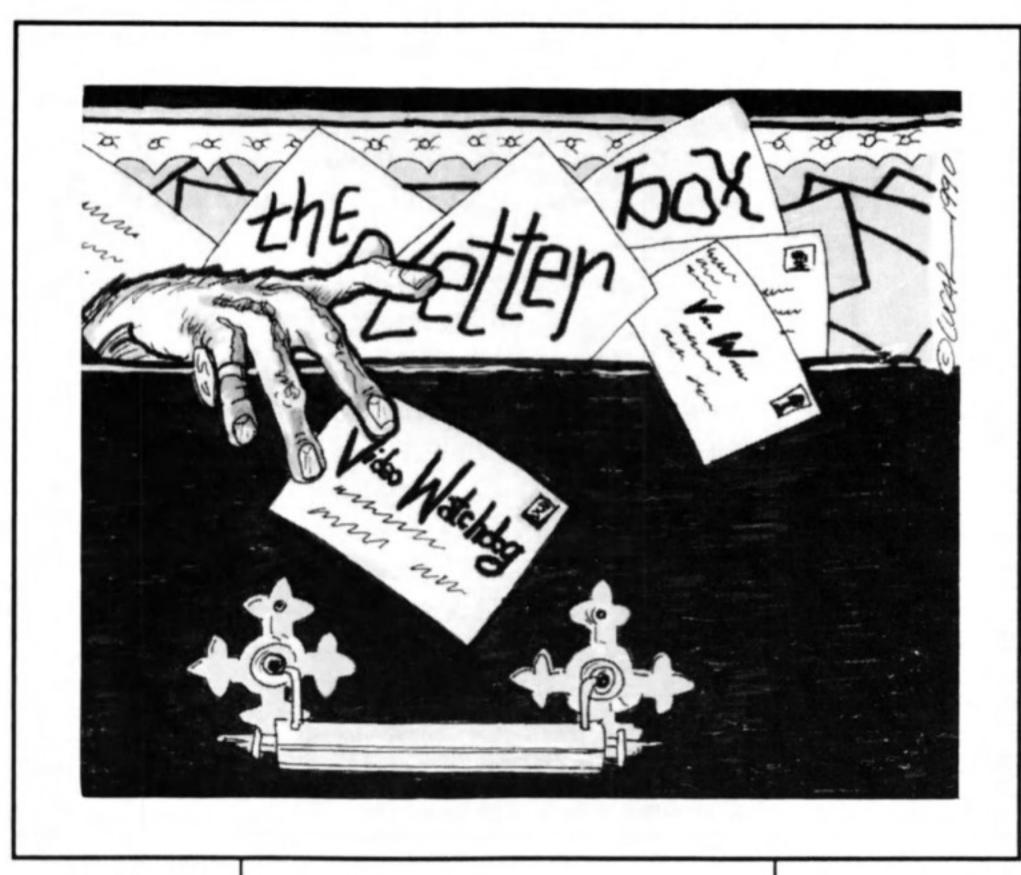
The faults of this book are slight: while discussing ASSAULT, Cumbow claims there is nothing whimsical or comical about the film's dialogue (then proceeds to quote reams of hilarious stuff), and he also fails to catch the significance of the name "Mrs. Seward" in this film about the vulnera-

bility of institutions (see Stoker's DRACULA); he doesn't explore HALLOWEEN's admitted stylistic debt to Dario Argento; the filmography doesn't include Carpenter's shared teleplay credit for the NBC TV-movie ZUMA BEACH (1978); it isn't mentioned that Carpenter directed additional scenes for both THE FOG (1980) and HALLOWEEN II (1981) to increase their violence quota—little things like that.

Another fault is Cumbow's maddening tendency to punctuate confident case-making with questions he then proceeds to answer overzealously, often overlooking the obvious in search of more subterranean explanations. Near the end of his chapter on ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK (1982), for example, Cumbow wonders why Snake Plissken trashes the President's cassette tape, sending him to his meeting with a replacement recording of the "American Bandstand" theme. Clearly, it isn't to sabotage world peace efforts "either because he doesn't trust those efforts, or because he stands for anarchy, and wants to hasten the old order's destruction of itself," as Cumbow suggests; in fact, the scene cocks a rather obvious snoot at the political pomposity and egoism that helped to shape the film's dystopian world. Carpenter's films may have an intellectual side, but there are times (particularly in this film) when his message is no more complicated than "Fuck Art, Let's Dance."

Perhaps because of its higher claims for Carpenter's work, ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE is most avid while exploring its increasingly metaphysical aspects, which Cumbow attributes to the director's fascination with quantum mechanics and Manx screenwriter Nigel Kneale, of QUATERMASS fame. The book includes a candid account, by Carpenter himself, of the falling-out between him and Kneale over HAL-LOWEEN III, and Cumbow's exegesis on the Knealean "minor masterpiece" PRINCE OF DARKNESS (which Carpenter scripted under the pseudonym "Martin Quatermass") is surprisingly persuasive. And his righteous rebuttal to the dated, pro-revolutionary diatribes written against ASSAULT ON PRE-CINCT 13 by Robin Wood and Tony Williams in AMERICAN NIGHTMARE is a display of individual critical justice that, I'm sure, would hold Carpenter himself transfixed. (More butt gets kicked between pages 36-44 of this book than in all of BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA.)

Like its companion volume in the "Filmmakers Series," ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE also sends its readers back to the films it's about—not in search of consolation, but in a refreshed spirit of adventure. The order in our universe may not be what we had in mind but, we're reminded, the order we have in mind was probably put there by the cinema.



PLAYGIRLS: THE BARE FACTS

I have been reading VIDEO WATCHDOG with great interest. It amused me to see references here and there to European genre films that I imported to USA and dubbed into English, such as the German CAVE OF THE LIVING DEAD Der Fluch der Gruenen Augen], the Italian TOMB OF TORTURE [Metempsycho], and the Italian-French co-production PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE [L'Ultima preda del vampiro]. Credit for the title PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE belongs to Joe Solomon of Fanfare Films, who came up with it when I licensed him the American theatrical distribution rights. I had (with less imagination!) called it LAST VICTIM OF THE VAMPIRE. Believe it or not, in the 1960's, the film was considered too "hot" for television because of the leading lady's seethrough nightgown and the striptease dance! Also, stations would not play a film called PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE, so I made a separate version for TV syndication called CURSE OF THE

VAMPIRE, with cuts here and there and some optical work to remove the TV censors' objections. This version recently played on the USA Network. An uncensored PLAYGIRLS is available but has not been licensed for home video so far. Both versions are fully protected by copyright, renewed this year in the name of Gordon Films, Inc.

Richard Gordon Gordon Films, Inc. New York, NY

With Richard's kind help, I was once able to compare PLAY-GIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE with CURSE OF THE VAMPIRE. All shots featuring Lyla Rocco's seethrough nightie were optically enlarged for CURSE, making sanitized closeups out of the original medium shots. The original version also includes fleeting above-the-waist nudity in scenes featuring nude vampire Maria Giovannini, and a striptease performed by Erika di Centa. PLAYGIRLS would easily earn an R rating today, and some enterprising video label with an interest in the preservation of

Euroshock should get on the ball and release this!

THE THREE PHASES OF DIALOGUE

Mario Bava's I tre volti della paura is available in Italy on the "Fonit Cetra" label, priced for sellthrough (about \$18). The print is crystal-clear and in the original 1.85:1 screen ratio. The dubbed Italian dialogue doesn't follow exactly the French version's dialogue, as transcribed and translated by Alan Upchurch [VW 5:39-47]; in fact, our version softens all the lesbian references in "The Telephone," much like the US version, as might have been predicted considering the heavy censorship existing in Italy in those years.

The first difference shows up in the second phone call. At the end, the voice doesn't say "I want to make you suffer..." but "I want revenge...," making it clear that this anonymous caller is someone Rosy knows. After that, the voice says, "You did well to turn all the lights on," which explains why Rosy runs all around the apartment after the call, turning all the lights off.

The dialogue in the third and fourth conversations follows the American dialogue closely, except for the last line, which is identical to the French ("Frank, listen..."). While the dialogue is identical to the US version, the editing is the same as the French!

In the "Rosy Calls Mary" talk, the lesbian innuendoes are removed. There is no significant pause in Mary's line ("Do you want me to come over?") and Rosy doesn't explicitly ask Mary to "spend the night."

At the point of Mary's arrival, after Mary asks "Something

bothering you?," Rosy answers with the question, "How did you get in?" Mary answers, "The front door was open," and walks in. The subsequent dialogue, unintelligible in the French version, is as follows: "Oh, Rosy! So much light! Are you the lover of an electric company employee? Oh, forgive me, I forgot that your lovers are always people of importance! be Must the company chairman..!"

During Mary's visit, Rosy doesn't say "he always knew what we had been...," but something more standard like "He knew I had called you," or something like that. When Rosy says, "He said I'll be dead before dawn," Mary

answers "Don't be afraid... pimps don't kill!"—making explicit for the first time the nature of Rosy's relationship with Frank. In the same conversation, the lines "I'll stay with you tonight" and "Let's go to bed" are replaced in the Italian version with "I'm here now" and "Go to bed, now."

Incidentally, the title of the second episode is spelled "The Wurdulak" on the title card, and is pronounced that way ("vur-dyoolack") throughout the film. The Italian version runs 88m 10s in PAL (approximately 92m in NTSC).

Simone Romano Pordenone, Italy



Attention Subscribers!

Although subscription copies are mailed a week in advance of distributor orders, some subscribers have been finding VW on newsstands before the arrival of their subscription copies. Postage increases earlier this year made it necessary for us to switch to bulk mailing. Regrettably, bulk mail can take up to 6 weeks to reach its destination, and is not forwarded when addresses change.

For our subscribers' convenience, we're maintaining our original \$18 rate (bulk mail)

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If you're a bulk mail subscriber, please inform us of any change of address as early as possible so your issues will not be lost along the way!

-TL



THE SECRET LIFE OF CRATES II

In the continuing saga of "The Secret Life of Crates" [VW 6:61], it might be of interest to note the presence of crates full of art objects bearing the name Xanadu, that make up most of Wings Hauser's warehouse in the movie L.A. BOUNTY. Yes, they're leftover props from CITIZEN KANE with their original contents still intact!

Likewise, the hero in ARSON FOR HIRE (late '50s, my guess) chases the villain through some warehouse units and encounters nothing less than the Tabonga from the movie FROM HELL IT CAME in a crate!

For the record, our picture BAD GIRLS FROM MARS was cut by MPAA censors, or at their request, in 15 places and eliminated at least 4m from the picture. The

new NC-17 rating has actually hurt things far more than it has helped. Now harmless little pictures are getting instant NC-17's where they never would have received an X before. INNER SANCTUM had to be cut by 6m to get the coveted R rating. I wish I had known that at the time of production. I could have saved myself a few days' work!

Fred Olen Ray American-Independent Productions Hollywood, CA

WHICH CAME FIRST?

Your review of CALIGULA REINCARNATED AS NERO [VW 4:13] contains a bad historical error. You write that "this title represents a confusion of history,

as Nero actually preceded Caligula." The pornmakers had it right. Caligula rules 37 to 41 AD, followed by Claudius, 41 to 54, then Nero, 54 to 68.

Michael Klossner Little Rock, AR

You're right to point out the clumsiness of my expression, Michael. What I meant, but was too lazy to look up, was the fact that the two Romans were contemporaries—Nero's birth in 37 AD preceded Caligula's assassination in 41 AD—dismissing the possibility of reincarnation. Nero's reign was no picnic, but it was entirely his own doing.

GEE WIZ

There's a video company out there called PMG Productions that distributes a line of films on the Gee Video label. They carry an interesting group of movies, including Franco's NIGHT OF THE BLOOD MONSTER, TERROR IN THE CRYPT, and PLANET OF BLOOD. Their quality isn't great; the last reel of GRAVEYARD OF HORROR has a lot of noise, the kind you hear when someone runs a vacuum cleaner while you're tuned to a local channel with rabbit ears. Their box art has to be seen to be believed (I've enclosed a photocopy of the box for their YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE). The artist even signs his name (Adam DeSantis). These drawings make the artists at Gorgon Video look like da Vinci. There was an added bonus: after YOG, there were previews for various adult features, complete with explicit sex footage. This is probably the only tape of an Inoshiro Honda film deserving of the NC-17 rating!

> Lorne Marshall Glen Burnie, MD

BAD, BUT TRUE

Lettuce Entertain You's HYDRA is an uncut print of Don
Barton's THE BLOOD WATERS
OF DR. Z (aka ZAAT, 1975). Thrillervideo's Elvira-hosted version,
ATTACK OF THE SWAMP CREATURE, features a video credit sequence listing "Arnold Stevens"
as director and eliminates the opening "Oh, Mighty Fish..." soliloquy, so as to start right off with the transformation.

SION FROM INNER EARTH (1974)—a near-incomprehensible sci-fi cheapie from the Rebane family (the director is identified only as "Ito") has yet to surface on video. Applause Productions' tape of this title has both the opening company logos and the full end credits, but is missing two reels or so from the middle! And whereas

most of the movie is just talk, these missing reels account for the disappearance of two major characters! Regal Video's print retitled THEY, and featuring a fanged reptilian creature on the box that's a far cry from the invisible Martians in the movie—is an uncut, better-looking print. Even the title change at the beginning is accomplished fairly smoothly. However, in knocking out the end credits for a quick video "The End" fadeout, they also removed the brief glimpse of the spaceship on the horizon in the final shot. It makes for a fun editing project.

The "Hollywood's Best" cassette of THE HOUSE OF EXORCISM (recorded at LP) cuts all of the nudity, but nothing else.

Palisades' THE SCORPION WITH TWO TAILS, though "Christian Plummer" is credited on the box as director, is actually Sergio Martino's MURDER IN THE

ETRUSCAN CEMETERY (1982). Martino's name is on the tape.

Shane M. Dallmann Pebble Beach, CA

A GNAWING QUESTION

Recently I viewed the European version of George Romero's DAWN OF THE DEAD. I knew from [Paul Gagne's] book THE ZOMBIES THAT ATE PITTSBURGH that this version was a little different from the American one, but the book also says that the 126m version released in the States by Thorn/EMI is uncut. So can you please explain to me why the copy I viewed was full of gore scenes not included on my Thorn/EMI cassette?

Jocelyn Bannon Montreal, Quebec Canada

ERRATA

- The date assigned to 6:7 SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN in the photo is incorrect; the date should read 1951. How then could George Reeves' role in **RANCHO NOTORIOUS** (1952) predate his casting as Superman? SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN, a 58m B&W low-budget quickie, beat the Technicolor Fritz Lang western-also produced in 1951—into theaters.
- 6:14 The prices of all Rainbow Video releases is \$39.95.
- 6:61 The crate scene appearing in Phoenix Distributor's MONSTERS & MANIACS is not from FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER, but rather Herbert L.
 Strock's I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN (1958). The crates bearing the address of Hammer Film Productions, seen in Dr. Frank-
- enstein's laboratory, were not used as "a tip of the hat to the studio that made Frankenstein commercial again" as we reported. The fact of the matter is, at the time of filming, producer Herman Cohen had his own London offices at the same Wardour Street address!
- 7:15 The correct translation of **Sette notte in nero** should read "Seven

I'll try. ZOMBIE, the European version of Romero's film, was the first version of the film to be theatrically released, and was "supervised" by Dario Argento. Argento overrode some of Romero's editorial decisions by beefing-up the Goblin soundtrack and using intermittent shots which Romero had deleted from his version. Though the two versions have their differences, neither is "cut" in the sense of being censored; both push screen gore to the limit. They are "cut" only in the sense that all films are cut prior to release, to fine-tune the final product. Both versions, however, look "cut" when you compare them to the 140m DAWN OF THE **DEAD** that is distributed on 16mm by Cinema V!

PROFONDO CONFUSO

I own an original Danish letterboxed tape of DEEP RED—the butchered, 96m version. While comparing it to **Profondo rosso**, the 122m Italian version from Domovideo, I noticed something strange about 50m into the movie. After the scene of the murderer's attempt to kill David Hemmings in his apartment, there is a 34s passage—it starts with the pickup arm being lifted away from the gramophone and ends on a closeup of one of Hemmings' professor friends—that is slightly different in both. If you watch the movements of Hemmings' hands during this interval, you'll see that they are entirely different on the two tapes! Isn't it a strange world we live in!??!

> Lars Von Hegnet Aalborg, Denmark

For unknown reasons, the two versions make use of alternate takes of the same scene.

THEY C THINGS MISSING ON CIC

I recently picked up the CIC version of THE PERILS OF GWENDOLINE and found it to be 104m—a full 16m longer than the Vestron version. The title on the CIC print is simply GWENDOLINE, though the cassette box features the Vestron art and the US title THE PERILS OF GWENDOLINE IN THE LAND OF THE YIK YAK.

The Vestron copy has a sharper image, better color, and HI Fi Stereo sound; the subtitled sequences are matted, making them easier to read. CIC's framing isn't the greatest, but the scanning

Black Notes," not "Six Nights of Darkness." The incorrect translation was the fault of the editor.

7:43 The correct translation of La vendetta di Lady Morgan should read "Lady Morgan's Revenge" —again, the fault of the editor.

7:61 We neglected to mention that Barbara Steele was featured in an episode of ADVENTURES IN PARADISE appropriately titled "Daughter of Illusion," broadcast December 12, 1960. This was her first US television appearance—not ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS' "Beta Delta Gamma," which first aired on November 14, 1961.

THE PIT AND THE PEN-DULUM (1962) is not available on Image Entertainment laserdiscs as reported. It is available on laserdisc in Japan, however, from Warner Home Video. Alas, the Japanese disc is not letterboxed.

7:62 The title of the ISPY episode featuring Barbara Steele is "Bridge of Spies." It was first broadcast November 9, 1966.

[Thanks to Lucas Balbo, David Hogan, Jim McCabe, Alan Upchurch, Tom Weaver, and Douglas Winter.]



is less annoying than Vestron's, which skates back and forth in a futile attempt to include everything.

Most of the extra footage is dialogue-related; exchanges go on longer, particularly the scene in which Brent Huff orally seduces Tawny Kitaen. A fair amount of extra footage occurs in the lost kingdom, where the climactic amazon combat sequences are much longer. A subplot involving Darcy, the Queen's assistant, as he tries convincing Gwendoline to escape with him is given a fair amount of time here—and is completely deleted from the Vestron tape.

John Charles Guelph, Ontario Canada

Annoyingly, CIC made their own (ie., not BBFC-enforced) distributor cuts in the British video release of Joe Dante's THE 'BURBS. The cuts were inflicted on the scene where Tom Hanks is watching TV and flicks through the channels. Although they were seen in the theatrical release, the clips from THE EXORCIST and THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MAS-SACRE 2 were removed from the video. I complained to CIC and they said that, as the two films-EXORCIST and TCM2-didn't have BBFC certificates, it would be illegal to leave them in!

> Matthew Goodman Middlesex, England

TRANS-EUROPE X-THESP

I am writing to correct an error made in VW 4:10, in regard to the late B-movie actress Ajita Wilson.

Ajita Wilson was a flamboyant B-movie actress who made more than a dozen Spanish/Italian action-adventure films in the late 1970's. She was born a 5'11" tall WOMAN in Flint, Michigan, the daughter of a Black American father and a Brazilian mother, who died of natural causes on May 26, 1987.

Ajita almost had the role of Mayday in the James Bond film A VIEW TO A KILL (1985), which was played by Grace Jones. She had played similar roles in quite a few Italian spy movies.

She was born a real woman, not a transsexual. I found this information in PLAYERS Magazine, Volume 14 Number 6 (November 1987).

M. Hairston, Jr. Capital Heights, MD

PLAYERS probably had reasons for not telling readers that they were admiring a surgically/hormonally-augmented male, but beautiful Ajita Wilson was in fact transsexual. British journalist Alan Jones (who wrote our Narciso Ibañez Serrador coverage in VW #4) met her in Greece in the early 1980's and, when asked about it, she openly confirmed the rumor. But being born a 5'11" tall WOMAN—that's a REAL shocker!

THE DISNEY CHANNEL IS WATCHING YOU

I thought it might be of interest to you and your readers that a movie called HOCKEY NIGHT, starring Megan Follows, was shown earlier this year on The Dlsney Channel—two scenes and sequences contained in the home video version were

missing, and the word "crap" was bleeped out! It was aired at 2:00 am, so I wonder whose sensitive ears they were protecting at that late hour?

Richard Kanarr Harrisburg, PA

Why, they're simply helping to promote good American values! The Disney Channel, which sells its programming to viewers with adjectives like "uninterrupted," habitually censors its feature films—even their own productions-without admitting that the films have been altered for broadcast. TV GUIDE runs Disney Channel film listings beside their original theatrical ratings; when a VW reader wrote to inform TV GUIDE of the cuts, he was notified that they were aware that Disney was censoring its films, but could not mention this in print without being officially informed of the practice by The Disney Channel. (Some fancy footwork going on here.) On The Disney Channel, you hear a lot of "son of a gun" in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?, while their version of HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS sweetens the line "We're all the size of boogers!" to "We're all the size of bugs!" We also found a shot of a woman nursing her child cut from CLASH OF THE TITANS and a glimpse of Timothy Hutton's bare backside removed from Alan Rudolph's MADE IN HEAVEN. The Family Channel (formerly the Christian Broadcasting Network) is up to similar monkey business-bleeping every last "hell" and "damn" from even very old movies, as if such language should be reserved solely for the pulpit. But that's a free channel... at least in the monetary sense.

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—BARBARA STEELE

No. 1, 1990
Jess Franco Interview,
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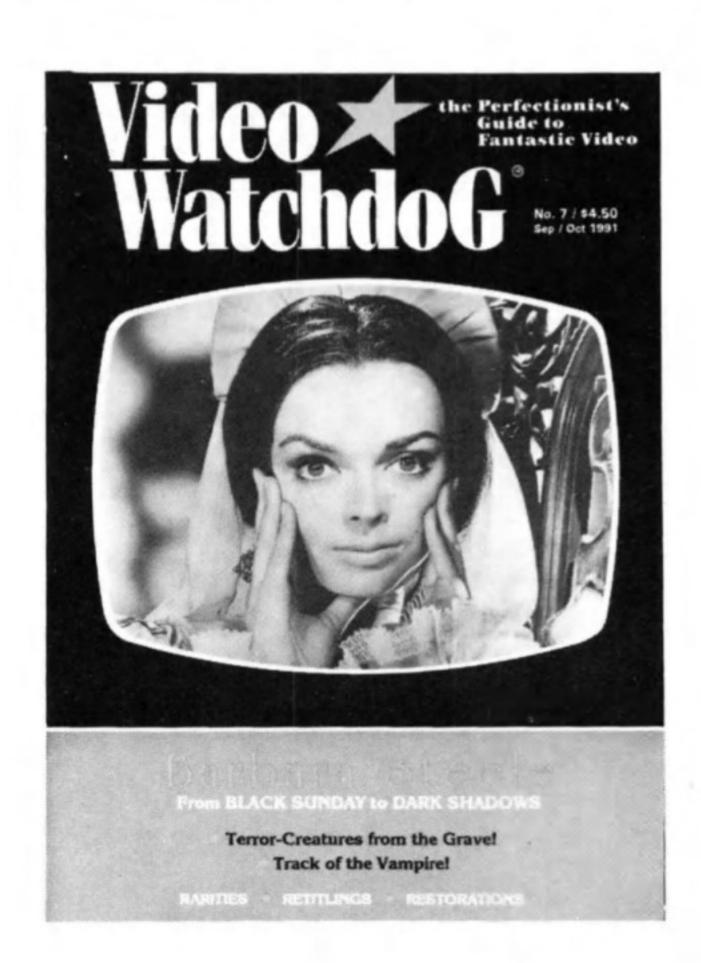
No. 3, Jan/Feb 1991
GANJA & HESS, BLOOD COUPLE,
ALIENS: SPECIAL EDITION, Pupi
Avati, Alfred Hitchcock &
PSYCHO.

No. 4, Mar/Apr 1991

BLUE VELVET Missing Scenes,

Coppola's OPERATION: TITIAN

Part 1, Narciso Ibañez Serrador



No. 5, May/Jun 1991
Restoring Mario Bava's BLACK
SABBATH, Jack Hill's BLOOD BATH
(OPERATION: TITIAN Part 2)

No. 6, Jul/Aug 1991
Special EXORCIST Issue! Missing
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Blatty, Friedkin, and
Dick Smith interviewed.

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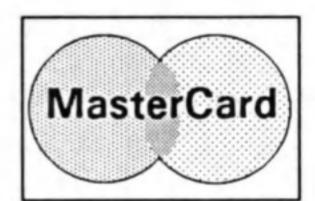


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